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THE M.O.I. SCHEMOZZLE

SOME Cabinet reconstruction seems imminent. It may involve Lord Beaverbrook and possibly Mr. Duff Cooper, who is in the centre of a first-class row about the status of the Ministry of Information. This Ministry has been everyone's butt since the war began. The press, which began by fearing its dictatorship, is now inclined to regard it with sympathy and even with favour. Everyone who has been in contact with it knows that the frequent changes of Ministers and senior staff has reflected more than internal confusion. As long as this country has not made up its mind what it is fighting for, apart from its determination to prevent a German conquest of this island, no Minister or staff can do the job of propaganda effectively. The long-distance strategy of propaganda, which has been one of Hitler's most potent weapons, is ruled out, and instead of that we have had an immense confusion in which half a dozen competing bodies have run competing and inconsistent lines of propaganda. This is a handicap over which no Minister of Information could triumph.

The immediate issue, however, is less comprehensive. The Ministry demands to be told the news and to have the most important say in what shall be published, and control over how it shall be published. Against the Service Departments they have an unanswerable case, which is likely to be appreciated when the House of Commons discusses British propaganda in the near future. Examples occur every day to illustrate the Ministry's legitimate complaint against the Admiralty, the War Office, the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Home Security. If a ship is sunk and the facts are known and public in America and in Germany, there can be no good reason for holding up publication in this country until the incident has been described as a German triumph and used fully by the German propagandist machine. Yet an Admiralty ruling may override all general considerations of the publicity strategy of the war. If, to take another example which reveals no secret, American correspondents in this country unite in urging that it is of vital importance that the American public should be told some details of the sinkings of American goods on their way to this country, it is not enough for the Admiralty to refuse on the ground that such information may reveal some fact which the enemy would like to know. The Ministry of Information must take careful account of the Admiralty's wishes on this point, but should be in a position to balance the risk against the larger interest of the propaganda value of the information in the United States. To have such authority the Minister should himself be a man of exceptional calibre and should take his place in the War Cabinet. It is doubtful if Mr. Duff Cooper would fill this bill, but we are sure that a compromise, which would appoint some present member of the Cabinet as arbiter in disputes between the Ministry and the Service Departments, would prove entirely unsatisfactory.

In nearly two years of war the Ministry has at last learnt certain lessons. It has some understanding, which the Service Departments seem not effectively to possess, of the nature of the present British public, which is more alive to humbug and more insistent on honest statement than any public has ever been before. Yet communiqués are constantly issued which bore the public and infuriate the populations of blitzed towns, who are proud of being in the front line, but who naturally resent the publication of statements which suggest that all their needs are fully cared for. Yet communiqués coming from the Ministry of Home Security or the Service Departments, which often show no imagination and a complete misunderstanding of popular psychology, must be put out with precisely the words demanded by the department concerned, without any modification from the Ministry. Again, during the last year most of the departments have appointed very able Public Relations Officers. These men have long experience, usually in the advertising world, and are brilliantly efficient at pushing the interests of the firm which employs them. But the " firm " to-day is a Department of State, whose interest must be related to those of all the other departments. The Public Relations Officer who advances the interests of one department to the detriment of another is continuing in wartime the job which it was his only to perform in a period of competitive industry, but which is now out of place. If the Ministry of Information is to continue at all, the responsibility of publicity must be in its hands; its business is to see that all publicity promotes the national and not the departmental interest. It is to be hoped that the issue will be settled without the loss of civil servants, like the present Director-General and Chief Censor, whose commonsense and integrity have earned them the respect and confidence of all who work with them.

The Postman Sometimes Knocks Once

In the various theatres of war to-day there are discernible one certainty and two major imponderables. The certainty is that our belated attempt at the protective occupation of Syria has badly misfired. The probable explanation of our dangerously slow progress in the Syrian campaign is that, having given the Vichyites six gratuitous months in which to prepare defensive positions and to arrest and deport officers who showed sympathy with the Free French cause, we advanced at a moment when every French mercenary was bound to be mindful of the possibly imminent arrival of German scrutineers, and—more fundamental—we attacked with forces smaller than military prudence required, for the reason that we calculated *politically* (and in error) that the Lawrence *coup* could be replayed, and that Syrian Arabia would confound General Dentz by rallying to our cause. History does not always repeat itself: the postman knocked once, in 1918.

The imponderables are, first, the extent to which General Rommel has been reinforced in Libya. General Wavell's offensive round Sollum and Fort Cupuzzo should probably be regarded as exploratory: his aim may well be to test the German strength rather than to gain a few miles of desert. The absence of news of German infiltration into northern Syria suggests that the enemy's plan may be to concentrate on a direct thrust from Sollum towards the Nile; but this would not be consonant with German "pincer" proclivities unless, as may be the case, our preoccupation with Crete and Syria has enabled General Rommel to obtain, presumably *via* Naples and Tripoli, surprisingly large reinforcements.

Secondly, there is the enigma presented by the comparative inactivity of the Luftwaffe in the West. Admittedly, during the period of the crescent moon, the weather was thick; and the hours of darkness in June relatively short. Nevertheless, persistent large-scale attacks (at considerable expense in aircraft) have been carried out by the R.A.F. against the Ruhr. Air operations of a *Blitz* order have been quite feasible, yet Field-Marshal Milch has used his bombers most sparingly. Why? It is very questionable whether Mid-East operations are relevant: the Western Luftwaffe Command is self-contained. The lull (termed invariably by Goebbels a "constrictive pause") in Germany's air offensive against Great Britain is explicable only on one of two assumptions. Either Hitler is still awaiting the final reactions, here and in the U.S.A., to various trial peace balloons, or the western Luftwaffe is being reorganised, reinforced and "mounted" for an early invasion of Britain, launched with every element of surprise and regardless of cost.

Logically a convincing case can be built up against the invasion hypothesis. Yet, just because it is illogical, and therefore surprising, the enemy may attempt it. Are we ready? In many respects no doubt we are; but confidence would be greater if the public were more fully satisfied that the Air Ministry and War Office jointly had realised that, in an invasion, the crux is the defence of aerodromes. That task requires infantry of the highest quality, plentifully armed with machine and sub-machine guns and supported, not merely by ample high-angle and low-angle A.A. artillery, but also by *heavy* tanks. At all costs defensive preparations on these lines must be made. But, if they are being made, how is the public to interpret this week's recruiting appeal for boys and old men to volunteer as air-field guards? Conceivably we need more armed police to protect aerodromes; and for that purpose the new force may be well-devised. This conceded, can we forget Crete? The C.-in-C. in England commands a great army. But if he concentrates on the beaches, and forgets the aerodromes on which our ultimate defence is based, he will serve us ill.

Japan and the U.S.S.R.

American newspapers this week disclosed a secret German-Japanese economic agreement, whereby Tokyo undertakes to deliver a big volume of tropical products, notably rubber, but also tin and vegetable oils, to Germany in return for the supply of German armaments to Japan. The Dutch East Indies, it is recalled, have agreed to sell Japan tropical produce, including rubber, in large quantities limited solely by Japan's domestic needs; but Batavia refuses to provide commodities for Japanese re-export to Germany. Japan's decision to attack or refrain from attacking the East Indies thus seems partly to depend on whether Japan wants German armaments so urgently as to risk war in the Pacific. Whether the reported trade pact can be carried out depends furthermore on Russia, which, in view of Britain's maritime blockade, is almost the only channel for commerce between Germany and Japan. On April 29 a Soviet decree banned the transit of arms across Soviet territory between any two other countries, thus legally blocking such traffic from Germany to Japan. Did Stalin drive this wedge between the two Axis extremities for future bargaining leverage in case of German demands on Russia, and would he lift the ban on conditions? The question is important. It might also be raised if Hitler wishes to use Soviet ports and railways for sending German war material to a possible German expeditionary force in the Middle East.

The Home Front (*by an Industrial Correspondent*)

Is there, even now, any one authority which is in a position to tell a manufacturer which of a number of Government orders in his books he ought to fulfil first? If a firm has, say, a contract for so many *x* from M.A.P., another for so many *y* from the Ministry of Supply, and yet another for so many *z* from the Admiralty, is there anyone who can tell positively which contract has priority? To the best of my belief there is not, and it is still quite common for the various departments to exert rival pressure on the firm, without any co-ordination. The Priorities Department deals with all creations of raw materials rather than execution of contracts; and, while this is sometimes a way of deciding indirectly between rival claims, it is by no means always effective, nor has the department a high place in the official hierarchy. Mr. Bevin's Productive Executive is presumably there to deal with such cases as reach it—with Lord Beaverbrook in the background as a "referee," whatever that means. But how many cases, in fact, reach the Productive Executive, and how well equipped is it for dealing with them so as to keep the contending departments in order? "Priority" is a tricky business; but even now the lesson does not seem to have been fully learnt that all priorities ought to be for definite quantities, and not merely for classes of goods, or that it is absurd to give equal priority to claims which are, in fact, necessarily competitive in view of shortages of materials and productive power.

* * *

The agricultural workers are now asking for a national minimum wage of 60*s.* a week. This raises a difficult issue. Agriculture is a key industry, and the labourer at 48*s.* a week, the minimum granted last year, is still badly paid in comparison with the munition worker or the builder. He is tied to the land "for the duration," and cannot leave to seek a more lucrative job; and it is less true than ever that goods are cheaper in the country districts than in the towns. On the contrary, except for house-rents, they are often dearer. But if agricultural wages are raised to 60*s.*, it is practically certain that the farmers will be compensated by higher prices, which will either be passed on to the consumer, or met by increased subsidies from the State. To allow a rise in the prices of essential foodstuffs would start an all-round demand for higher wages, which it would be impossible to resist. This being so, the policy of higher subsidies would have to be adopted instead, which would not please the Treasury. But the farm workers have clearly a case; for if they do not get a decent living wage now they are most unlikely to get it after the war. The only reasonable alternative is to institute family allowances, which would be both cheaper and more equitable than a general upward revision of wages, with its unavoidable inflationary effects.

* * *

The Trade Unions, which, like some other organisations, take a sectional view of the war, still frustrate Labour ministers who wish to adopt Family Allowances as part of a rational plan for the reorganisation of our productive system for war. The Labour Party Executive, faced with the T.U.C.'s decision to shelve the issue, ran away from its own memorandum favouring a system of family allowances. Fred Marshall, M.P., in his presidential address to the Municipal and General Worker's Union, reiterated all the old fallacies ever perpetrated over this question. How he could maintain that allowances paid by the State and financed by the Budget would affect the employment of married workers is incredible. But there are many incredible things said and done these days. The upshot is that Sir K. Wood all but said to a deputation of M.P.s in favour of family allowances that though he was quite willing to introduce them, Mr. Bevin—presumably under pressure by his friends—has vetoed it. We are to have yet another Committee on the problem. But is time not pressing? Family allowances are not merely a social problem. They are a war economic problem. A rational nutrition policy is not possible without them, and without a rational nutrition policy our shipping policy, the most urgent of our problems, will continue to be mishandled and precious cargo-space wasted on inferior food imports.

The re-housing of workers in heavily bombed areas is in a most unsatisfactory state. In theory, there is, at any rate in some towns, still enough available accommodation; but much of it consists of middle-class houses in which a servant or one member of the household has been left to "hold the fort," or of empty houses which are on offer only at rents far beyond working-class means. In face of this situation, compulsory billeting powers are but sparsely used, and are, in fact, difficult to use where there is no one to take charge of the billetees. The right remedy in many cases is for the State, or the local authority acting for it, to take over the houses, whether empty or partly occupied, and run them as public hostels at fixed charges. This applies mainly to suburban houses: empty houses in "target" areas ought not to be regarded as "available accommodation." Where there is a deficiency of premises, hutments or temporary houses ought to be run up quickly in suitable places not too far from the works, but relatively safe because scattered. Presumably this will be one of the jobs for the new mobile squads of builders; but no one—not even the authorities—appears to know whether the requisite materials are or can quickly be made available, though it is reassuring, up to a point, to be told by the committee which has just studied the cement position that we can have all the cement we have labour to use. Meanwhile, work in many areas is being badly held up because blitzed workers have to live far away from work, and transport for carrying them to and fro is lamentably insufficient. This report comes not from one area, but from a dozen; and all the evidence goes to show that the effects on output are serious, even in summer.

The Mood of the House (*By a Parliamentary Correspondent*)

After the week-end in their Divisions Members met together at the beginning of this week in a very serious mood. Some impatience was expressed that the House was this week forced to spend its time on routine legislation like the Finance Bill instead of debating the vital issues which are boiling up beneath the surface. One view freely expressed on all sides is that there must be an end to secret sessions. The country must now be awakened to the realities of the situation by full and open debate on the floor of the House.

Shinwell's insistence that the forthcoming shipping debate should be held in public is now thoroughly justified. Shipping is the main bottleneck in the war effort, and the limitations imposed by the restricted shipping space available must dictate the form of our economic organisation to bring our war effort to its maximum. Besides, the Prime Minister made it clear that transport was one of the two causes to which he attributed our defeat in Crete. The other cause, he said, was shortage of equipment. That is why there must be immediately widely ranging debates on both man-power and production: productivity must be increased if we are to avoid disaster. I mentioned in these notes last week that there was a growing tendency for capital and labour to blame each other for failure to produce adequately and effectively. At question time on Tuesday, when Grenfell was making heavy weather under a barrage of questions on the failure of coal production, capital and labour started taunting each other across the floor of the House. Capital accused Labour of absenteeism and Labour accused Capital of mismanagement. Members are now perhaps more deeply concerned by the failure of the Government to give a clear lead on the home front than by any other single defect in our war effort. There are Members in all parties who see clearly that Government policy has left the ultimate control of industry in the hands of vested interests on the management side, with the result that trade unionism insists upon its pound of flesh as well. The taking over of various industries by the State for the period of the war on a compensation basis is a solution foreshadowed in some quarters.

All these questions come back to the main issue, the capacity of the Government, as at present constituted, to carry out its heavy task effectively. The Prime Minister is said to be contemplating some reconstruction of his team. Will he content himself with merely discarding one or two of his more inefficient Ministers and increasing the business element? Such changes would be wholly inadequate for the purpose. Feeling is growing rapidly that the only reconstruction of the Government which can cope with disorganisation on the home and economic fronts is the formation of a small War Cabinet of men, freed from departmental duties, who are capable of confronting the Prime Minister on equal terms of knowledge and argument, and who will settle policies after cool realistic appraisal of all the factors inherent in the dangerous situation by which we are now confronted.

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STALIN AND HITLER

In this Nazi-Soviet situation, which has filled the world's press during the last week, knowledge must be divided from rumour and rumour from surmise. Only central fact is definitely known. Moscow itself admits very large German troop concentrations on the northern frontiers of the U.S.S.R. The Finns have for some time been expressing alarm about the pressure of several German divisions. Other reports, whose authenticity is unquestionable, give details of German concentrations at strategic points along the whole Soviet frontier. But when we come to the question of German demands on Stalin, we are in the realm of rumour, even though in some cases the sources are not to be dismissed as unimportant. Whether Germany has asked for the demilitarisation of the Ukraine or for the acceptance by Stalin of German management of factories and railways or of German experts in Russian industries, we do not know. According to another version Germany has asked permission to transport troops by the Trans-Caucasian Railway from Poti to Tabriz, which would indicate an invasion of Iran by way of the Black Sea. There are also stories that Hitler has demanded a "special government" for the Ukraine, for which a fifth column has in fact been waiting in Germany with Berlin's encouragement ever since the last war. These and other rumours are strenuously denied by Moscow and not confirmed by official sources here, even if some of them are likely in themselves. One other significant development has now come to light. Germany and Turkey have negotiated a treaty by which Turkey will remain neutral in case of war between Germany and Russia. The Turks have reserved their obligations of neutrality to Britain, but the new pact suggests a complete severance between Russia and Turkey, until recently the Soviet's one firm ally. This German treaty may be interpreted as the concentration of German troops may be, either as a definite preparation for war or as a further weapon of blackmail to force Stalin to give way. The most sinister interpretation, is that Hitler has waited for the conclusion of this pact, that he now intends war against Russia without delay and that he has made no "demands" on Stalin because all possible demands will be included in a single ultimatum.

We are now in the realm of surmise. First, will Stalin fight or will he have the chance to continue appeasement? The answer, we take it, depends on the extent of German demands, the degree of Stalin's faith in the Red Army if it comes to fighting against the Germans, and his judgment about whether war or further concessions would be the more dangerous to the stability of his regime. Stalin will certainly keep out of war if he can, but it is to be noted that if any of the demands we have mentioned are more than rumour, Stalin would be adopting a new and very unpopular policy in yielding to them. The U.S.S.R., for instance, has employed many foreign experts, but it has never yet allowed foreign technicians into the secrets of U.S.S.R. industry or defence. Moreover, Stalin knows that to allow the Germans to penetrate into Russia would be but a Munich followed by a later Prague, and though the U.S.S.R. is large, loss of sovereignty over the Ukraine, for instance, would be a very serious blow, not only to the prestige and internal confidence of the Soviet Union, but also to its economic structure. At some point, we must assume, Stalin would find it necessary to fight. If war begins there are those who believe that the Red Army would give a good account of itself. It is very large, well trained and some of it highly mechanised. We have never accepted the pseudo expert view that the weakness of the Russian army was exposed by its early defeats in Finland before Stalin had realised that serious military measures would be necessary to overcome the Finns. As against all this, however, we must recognise considerations that lead us to expect a German victory. The plains of Russia are ideally suited for German Panzer divisions, and though Russia has great numbers of parachute troops, good pilots and a large air force it is likely that its aeroplanes are badly out of date in comparison with those of Germany, which has been producing under the immense impetus of the war with Great Britain. Large-scale production was begun in Russia some years ago and the efficiency of aeroplanes has immensely increased since then. Moreover, we cannot expect Russian staff work, communications or general organisation to be in the same class as the German. The U.S.S.R. lacks this military and technical tradition and though Soviet Russia has spent large sums on armaments, Russia has not, like Germany, for years wholly subordinated the life of its people to plans for war. Reviewing these facts many experts are apt to assume that the Germans would reach Moscow or penetrate to the Caucasus in a few weeks.

We now reach a final question which we have not seen much discussed in the British press. It is far from certain that the war between Russia and Germany, which would be, whatever happened, a calamity for Russia, would contribute to the defeat of the Nazis in Europe as a whole. If Stalin can still play the game of appeasement, Germany will gain a greater, though no doubt still a very partial, command over Russian resources; if Stalin fights and Germany quickly acquires Russian territory, Hitler's control over Russian industry, oil and wheat may be more effective and complete than it can be through unwilling concessions on Stalin's part. Against this must be set several imponderable factors. Whether Stalin's regime could survive a German penetration, either by war or without it, is an open question, but in either case contact between the Bolsheviks and the Nazi regime might lead to important repercussions throughout Germany and Russia. The Communist philosophy still lives and Hitler may still fear its infection. Secondly, if Hitler were to be successful, as experts believe, in swiftly reaching Moscow or the Caucasus, he would have taken on an unlimited liability which would not end with his immediate victory. Russia is too big a country to be completely subjected at a blow, and in taking on Russia Hitler would add far more to his problems than he has by occupying France or the Balkan countries. The unhappy fact remains that if Germany does defeat Soviet Russia, Hitler would probably succeed in swiftly improving and utilising Russia's resources; moreover in the event of war, effective co-operation between the U.S.S.R. and Britain, which might once have prevented war, would now be extremely difficult. Hitler no longer faces a land war on two fronts; he has once again split his enemies. Geographically as well as spiritually, a great gulf is fixed; the loss of Crete blocks the entrance to the Black Sea and the only direct contact left is in the Near East. Britain would gain a few months' respite while Hitler concentrated on the East, and we ought in the event of war to do everything within our power to collaborate by staff conversations, and on the economic field. There may also, as a correspondent suggests this week, be possibilities of joint resistance to Hitler in Iran, where there is a three-party struggle between Germany, Russia and ourselves. We must also bear in mind the possibility that the whole of Hitler's Eastern concentration may be merely a feint or an insurance and that the attack may swiftly shift to the West.

ABSENTEEISM AND ITS REMEDY

MR. BEVIN broke out the other day in protestation against the widespread charges that absenteeism on the part of the workers is seriously interfering with war output. He said quite truly that it is gross unfairness to charge a docker with slackness if, after working continuously day and night to discharge an urgent cargo, he then stays away from work until he has taken a reasonable rest. The same thing applies to aircraft and other munition workers who are kept at overtime day after day on vital contracts, until flesh and blood can stand no more; and, with a difference, there is the case of the elderly or physically unfit miner, often a victim of prolonged unemployment in the past, who simply cannot stand up regularly to six days a week—much less to seven—of continuous work under the nerve-racking conditions of modern colliery organisation. Such men may be marked down as absentees on any day when they do not present themselves for work. But such absenteeism is, in fact, not a crime, but a matter of plain common sense: it is needed in order to preserve the worker from breakdown and conserve his productive energy for the future.

In truth, much of the present newspaper talk about absenteeism is a stunt, and no more. But there are, as Mr. Bevin no doubt fully recognises, other kinds of absenteeism besides those which arise out of sheer bodily needs. Nor is there much doubt about the principal cause. In factory after factory, workers are kept repeatedly idling for long stretches either because essential materials have failed to arrive, or because designs are being changed and the labour force is being held together until the factory is ready to resume full production, or because output has got out of adjustment, so that one part of the factory is thrown idle until the workshops which are behindhand have been able to catch up.

It is simple human nature for men or women who have been forced from one or another of these causes to idle on the job against their will not to be too squeamish about taking a holiday when they feel like having one. If the management can waste so many days of their labour, why should they not occasionally take a day or two for themselves without considering its convenience? Remember that these days of involuntary idleness mean to the pieceworker—that is, to the majority of the munition workers concerned—a serious loss of income; for when they are kept idle they receive at most only their basic wages, without piecework additions. This is exasperating to them, especially if they believe, as they very often do, that their idleness is the management's fault, or largely so, and that their services, regarded by the State as important enough to justify tying them to their jobs, are not being properly used in aid of the war effort. Loss of earnings and the thwarted will to pull their weight then work on the same side to produce a mood of exasperation; and in such a mood the worker, who would chuck the job and try elsewhere if he were allowed, is apt to say "To hell with it!" and to lose his sense of responsibility for doing his level best.

The extent to which men are being compelled to stand idle in the workshops when they are ready and willing to work is, by all the accounts that come our way, in most trades a much more serious matter than voluntary absence from work. No doubt, some of this idleness is unavoidable; for when expected supplies of materials get sunk or bombed, or when one department of a factory gets put temporarily out of action, delays are bound to occur. But there is a widespread conviction among skilled workmen, including men of the supervising grades, that in many factories the waste of valuable labour time goes far beyond what can be explained on these grounds. Firms are accused of using wartime restrictions on the movement of workers to hold on to skilled labour, even when they cannot make full use of it, because they hope or expect to need it at some future time, and know that it will be very difficult to replace if they once let it go. In effect, the restrictions on the worker's right to change his job at will, and on the employer's right to engage what labour he pleases, while they were designed to convert the serious abuses of "poaching" and mere restless movement from job to job, are apt to produce the unfortunate effect of making it easier for employers to retain labour of which they are not making proper use. The Ministry of Labour's inspectors are supposed to prevent this; but their powers are limited in practice, especially when a firm can flaunt in their face a letter from the Ministry of Aircraft Production or one of the other supply departments stating that it is essential that they should not be in any way disturbed.

In part, the difficulty arises from the continuing muddle about "priorities," to which we refer elsewhere in this issue. But the cause of the trouble really lies deeper still—in the attempt to mobilise the resources of industry for war output without interfering in any respect with the peacetime capitalist structure of business. In the less essential industries, firms—especially small firms—are at last being ruthlessly telescoped or driven out of business on the ground of shortages of labour or materials, or of both. But to this process, known as "concentration," there is no analogy at all in the methods which are used by the supply departments in dealing with essential war industries. It is, of course, true that in the latter group the need is to expand, and not to contract, output. But may it not be that the continued independence of each separate firm, admitted to be inconsistent with the need to contract output, is no less inconsistent with expanding it to a satisfactory level?

There arises at this point the question of the incentives which are to govern production in time of war. In a great many cases it makes practically no financial difference to the employer whether output is high or low. To the pieceworking employee it is supposed to make a difference; but where he is kept standing idle for part of the week this difference often disappears, and the piecework incentive practically ceases to operate. Now these conditions, in their psychological effects, make the worst of both worlds. The employer still feels himself to be a profit-maker, but a thwarted one, because no extra effort can add appreciably to his profits. The workman still feels himself to be the employee of a capitalist, profit-making concern, but ceases to be able to add appreciably to his earnings by working harder. Both employer and worker may be patriotic citizens, and believe themselves to be devoted to the task of beating the Nazis. But upon both alike the ambiguity of status and incentive acts as a powerful deterrent to continuous effort: in both it engenders a cynical and even irresponsible state of mind.

We have argued many times before that the right way of organising the essential industries in time of war is for the State to take them over, paying fixed incomes to shareholders, fixed salaries to managers, and fixed wages to manual employees. This need not prevent the payment of piecework earnings or of bonuses on output, whenever they seem desirable. But it would have the effect of making both managers and workers regard themselves as servants of the State and provide them with a direct incentive of public service in place of the selfish incentives which have in practice so largely broken down.

It would, moreover, make possible the shifting of workers without difficulty from a factory in which for one reason or another they could not be fully employed to a factory in need of their temporary services—or, alternatively, a shift of work from factory to factory in order to secure more continuous all-round employment.

The only rational objection we have heard to this proposed pooling of factories under direct State employment is that there are no managers to be had who would be capable of managing the larger units which the plan would involve. But this is nonsense. There is no doubt a serious shortage of competent managers; but that is all the more reason for giving those who are highly competent the widest possible sphere of influence. It is simply not sense, under war conditions, to go on treating each firm, large or small, as a quite separate unit, entering into separate contracts with each firm, and allowing each firm to keep its own private reserves of labour and machinery—to say nothing of the further fact that each firm may have contracts with several different supply departments, and be left without any clear indication of the relative urgency of its various jobs.

Absenteeism, in effect, is a symptom, and not the disease. The basic trouble is the failure, even now, to grasp at all the essential conditions for the effective mobilisation of industry in time of war, the attempt to carry on without disturbing the peacetime business structure, the continued reliance on incentives which have necessarily lost their force. This situation gives a standing invitation to the few trouble-makers who are always at hand to make the most of their chances. It breeds not only little strikes of growing frequency, but still more a pervasive slackness which creeps even on those who have no sympathy with "Communist agitators" and are fully at one with the Labour leaders' war attitude. There is no easy remedy—none that does not involve drastic changes in economic organisation. So there is an easy preference for girding at the worker for absenteeism, instead of attacking the causes which lie behind it.

A LONDON DIARY

WHO would have expected a few years ago a leading article in the *Times* suggesting that Sir Stafford Cripps should join the War Cabinet? Not so long ago he was the special butt of the heavy irony in which the *Times* has always specialised. War has changed all that. Sir Stafford's despatches from Moscow have shown an ability and grasp far beyond that of the ordinary ambassador, and the need for using his exceptional capacities here—for even the Tories have always admitted his ability—is now generally recognised. I think his appointment is more likely to be opposed by some Labour representatives than by Conservatives. But circumstances may demand his return to Russia.

* * *

Last autumn the R.A.F. defeated the Luftwaffe, partly by superior training, but partly by superior scientific knowledge. The press then circulated stories that the problem of the night bomber was on the way to solution. Disappointment followed. Some time ago I made some serious enquiries about the progress of this problem, and learnt to my joy that, though the release of the news had been premature, the technique of defeating the night bomber had actually been mastered. Now with the urgent need of trained radio experts and scientists to deal with the new method of "radiolocation," the full facts have been given publicity first by Mr. Mackenzie King in Canada and since then by Mr. Bevin and Mr. Attlee. It is a popular delusion that inventions are a question of somebody thinking of a bright idea. The reality is that some individual or more often smart individual discover the best way of applying in practice a principle on which a group of scientists have long been working. Even when the invention is completed, there is necessarily a long lag in the mass production of the articles required and in the training of people to use them. To-day it seems that once again defence has caught up with offence. One must not be too sure of results, the Germans may have other devices for bombing which will have again to be countered. But the whole aspect of the war will be changed, if it is true, as I think it may be, that in future the losses through night bombing will prove large, and perhaps large enough to act as a deterrent.

* * *

"Yes," he said, "sixteen of them's going to have their necks wrung this very evening, Sunday though it be, and I wish I could wring Lord Woolton's bloody neck into the bargain. Fond of those birds, I was, but neither me nor the wife is going to fill up forms (we've had forms enough to make your head ache) nor traipse summer and winter four miles to their blessed egg-collecting centre. Besides, if we only keep twelve hens, we shall have enough eggs for ourselves; whereas, with twenty-eight—*and* you'll bear in mind we used to oblige three neighbours—we should only be allowed a ration of maybe two eggs, or less, a week." So argued my friend, a gardener in the Cotswolds; and I gathered that his sad little holocaust of "surplus" fowls was being paralleled last week-end throughout the length of the lovely countryside and, for all I know, in every back-garden from Worthing to Wigan. Concede that in terms of the fodder-imports and protein-products equation, the commercialised hen is an uneconomic creature, and that there is a strong case for regulating and pooling the production of all regular poultry-farms. Do the same arguments apply to the innumerable flocks of two, three or four score hens kept as an adjunct to farm, small-holding or even back-garden, and nourished largely by kitchen-waste—collected often in part from neighbours? The verdict is, I think, Not Proven; and, though this may be in astrologers' parlance a "good week for boiling fowls," has Lord Woolton really furthered our war effort by securing the massacre of millions of laying hens? There is an answer, of course, to some of my gardener friend's objections. To overcome marketing difficulties he obviously ought to enrol himself in a Farmers' Co-operative; and the Minister of Food will clearly have to connive at the retention of eggs by poultry-keepers for their own household use.

* * *

Democracy does not easily "plan," and the real issue of the debate on Crete was whether Britain has yet learnt to plan for war either at home or abroad. How emulate German staff work, and persuade Army and Navy and Air Force to form a single Command? How decide on a strategic programme and yet keep the flexibility necessary to meet the ingenuity and boldness of Nazi attack? Mrs. Rathbone put the matter well when she said that it was getting late to talk of "learning the lesson" of Crete and asked whether the defensive plans to meet the new technique of mass air invasion included "the possibility of impossibilities." Part of the solution seems to me contained in a new Penguin called *Planning for the War*. Its author, Colonel Garcia, analyses the tangle of problems of war organisation and differentiates between "static" planning, and "dynamic" which demands quite different qualities of ingenuity and inventiveness. All these, must be "pressed into service to achieve some aims seemingly unattainable." On co-ordination of the fighting services, the author urges the need of a planning organisation which must unite separately from the Higher Command whose principal job must be to choose the lines of attack to be chosen for concentrated effort. But General Garcia is not content with generalisations about a War Cabinet issue. He illustrates with a remarkably clear and simplified account of the whole war situation in mid-April. On his showing Britain's weak point is her sea-communications and Germany's weakest point is oil deficiency. Colonel Garcia estimates her oil income as 15 million tons for 18 months since the outbreak, entirely expended; an accumulation of possibly 12 millions, to meet demands of war expenditure of 10; leaving a balance of 2 million tons increasingly difficult to replace. On this calculation Britain is offered the strategic choice, for offensive action, of land operations in Western Europe (not in Germany which is inaccessible), against the German army, or air operations against German oil resources and communications. He makes a strong case for the latter.

* * *

It may be hoped that the House of Commons will give the most critical attention to the Bill to establish hydro-electric works in Glen Affric and Glen Cannich. Those are remote valleys in Ross-shire, wild and lovely. As usual in Scotland there is water, but of irregular flow, so that an electricity supply will mean the building of great cement dams and the creation of artificially regulated current. The power will be led by pylons to the South, to join the Grid. The argument for the scheme is that an engineering company will profit. The argument against it is that it will ruin the most beautiful inland scenery in Britain, and drown the crofts and sheep-farms to employ a handful of minder-mechanics. The electricity could be generated more cheaply, and with a far shorter portage, in the mines of the Lowlands, many of which are going out of production for want of markets. Electricity for the Northern towns and villages can be cheaply generated by using the rivers for small plants, without devastating the scenery. The big works destroy the tourist traffic which is the greatest present resource of the country. They are passionately opposed by the Scottish people. The Scottish M.P.s are in a hopeless minority in Parliament. But the majority, who are the trustees for the future of Britain, surely ought to oppose and prevent this needless and mischievous project.

A correspondent sends me this passage from Shakespeare *Henry VI* (Part III), Act 4, Scene I:

Hastings: Why, knows not Montague that of itself
England is safe, if true within itself?
Montague: Yes; but the safer when 'tis back'd with France.
Hastings: 'Tis better using France than trusting France:
Let us be back'd with God and with the seas
Which He hath given for fence impregnable,
And with their helps only defend ourselves:
In them and in ourselves our safety lies.

How slowly the essentials of national outlook change and how dangerous if they change too late! CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of this column goes this week to R. H. Champion.
All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

A new edition of the Bible, specially written for "the man-in-the-street" and illustrated with pictures of tanks, marching armies and aeroplanes, is to be published on July 10th.—Report in *News Chronicle.*

"We like our girls to wear stockings," said the London staff controller of Barclays, "but no doubt they would be forgiven if they came without them. At the moment, there is no excuse, so the question has not yet arisen.

"I think the question of bare legs would depend on the views of the controller in the particular area.

"In a cathedral town, for instance, bare legs might be out of place."—*Star.*

This . . . is not the place to discuss the reason or the possible outcome of such an unparalleled happening (the arrival of Hess). It does appear, however, as if the British strategy of drawing the German mechanised forces out into the hot deserts, of fighting the battle of the Atlantic with very considerable success, of bombing Germans in Germany, is a phase of the war for which the enemy has but little stomach.—*Flight.*

DEATH OF SIR HUGH WALPOLE
Famous Novelist Who Put Lakeland on Literary Map
—*The Herald* (Cumberland)

And who can forget that it was on the road to Damascus that out of the burning bush the Voice cried: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"
—Guy Ramsey in *News Chronicle.*

GOOD HUNTING

No, do not shoot the Ministers,
There is not one but does his best,
And in the fullness of the years
Their work will stand the sternest test.
Let none their headlong drive impede
To put the war machine in gear,
But end the grip of licensed greed
And let us hound the profiteer.

The law, according to report
Metes punishment to fit the crime,
But profiteers if haled to court
Incur no risk of doing time.
For inconsiderable loot
The sentence may be quite severe—
Then magistrates may freely shoot.
They may not shoot the profiteer.

Purveyors to the Government
May take their rake-off on supplies
(With all our savings to be spent,
'Twere folly to economise)
But he who swipes the people's pence
May cost the country far too dear,
It saves both trouble and expense
To liquidate the profiteer.

Then give blown Ministers a rest
As common objects of the chase
And wipe out as a social pest
This blot upon the human race.
With his ill-gotten goods and gains
The law is loth to interfere,
But public duty still remains
So why not shoot the profiteer? SAGITTARIUS

THE HOME FRONT

THE two battle fronts—the Fighting Front and the Home Front—merge only when invasion comes. But they should be inter-related not spasmodically, but all the time. When a battle is raging the workers are told that the outcome depends upon their output. And upon what does their output depend?—upon food, the source of human energy; upon working conditions; upon the means of production, tools, materials, buildings and organisation; upon their homes and the welfare of their families; upon confidence, and that does not mean sunshine talk, but a clear presentation of the facts; and upon leadership on the Home Front.

Where, we ask, is the Churchill of the Home Front? When we want a clear exposition, a definite answer to criticisms of military strategy, the country and the House of Commons looks to Churchill. But there is no one man to answer on the strategy of the Home Front. We get it in bits and pieces—food, civil defence, health, Board of Trade, transport, labour-supply, etc., etc.

During the past fortnight the issues of food and civil defence have bulked large. The Nazis have been over and have dropped leaflets telling us that we are losing the Battle of the Atlantic and that we will starve next winter. That shows that there is just as much wishful thinking in Germany about our food situation as there is among some British people about the food situation in Germany. There is no excuse for either. People who spread rumours of hunger in Germany are doing a serious disservice to their country. The Nazis learned the lessons of the last war thoroughly in food strategy as in military strategy. For six years they have been evolving a food economy which is monotonously self-sufficient, with the spoil of occupied countries as the side dishes.

The British people will not starve next winter, but it will need imagination and organisation to provide an adequate diet. Lord Woolton, Minister for Food, has assured us that our Food Line is not broken and there is reason for confidence. But not for over-confidence, not for complacency, not for a what-have-we-in-the-larder-this-week policy. Everything in the allotment is not lovely. Even when the Battle of the Atlantic swings in our favour, Lord Woolton may be offering us a new version of "Beef or Bardia." As U.S.A. production increases more ships will be needed to bring it in. As our army manpower and our equipment expand, and the battlefronts spread, the demand will be for ships for the transport of men and equipment. The Fighting Front will be insisting on tonnage priority over the Home Front.

Therefore we need to conserve heavy stocks against the winter, ahead of the 1942 campaign. That means storage and canning and refrigerator space. But it means a great deal more. It means an extension of communal feeding to an increasing proportion of the community. Only through communal feeding can the maximum use of our available supplies be ensured. I was in a hospital last week-end where waste had been reduced from 8½ cwt. to less than 1 cwt. a week, by combining the various staff messes into one; at the same time the food was more varied and cheaper.

We must have industrial canteens available to every worker; where the factory unit is too small to support one, it ought to be supplied from a central communal kitchen, or there must be a British Restaurant handy. That is still not enough. Neither the workers nor the fighting men can wage war if they are haunted by the distress of their families. These families, both in terms of food and of civil defence, are the hostages of this war. Hitler in *Mein Kampf* stresses, as one of the major factors in the German defeat, the demoralising effect of distressing letters to the soldiers at the front from their families and relatives at home. Therefore there must be the widest possible extension of school meals. The old resistances and prejudices are breaking down. In many areas where paid-for meals are available, a third of the parents are already taking advantage.

The supply of meals throughout the country as a whole has increased by 22 per cent. since February. For the under fives feeding arrangements at the nursery schools must be extended to the nursery centres as well. For the adult population there must be universal availability of "British Restaurants"; private caterers must be made, very firmly, to realise that they are only Second or Third or even Fourth Line "British Restaurants." This method of feeding the mass of the population is a major safeguard against any risks of malnutrition next winter. It is the most effective way of buttressing any rationing system and of securing equitable distribution, as well as supplementary rations to those need them most—the workers and the children.

The milk supply is and must be a number one priority. And the milk must go where it is needed most—first to the mothers who bear the children and the children themselves. The policy of the Ministry of Food in insisting upon this is one of the things that stands high to its credit. The Board of Education is to be commended for the way it has insisted on pushing up the milk supply to schools; it is up by 20 per cent. in three months; now 2¾ million children out of 4½ millions at school are getting milk. There are, however, local complaints of failures of school milk distribution. The distributors have claimed higher and higher rates for delivery. Presently the Ministry will have to face the blunt proposition that it must take over, not only the production, but the supplying of milk. And the time is coming when the Ministry of Agriculture will have to be incorporated as a department of the Ministry of Food—a producers' Ministry properly related to the consumers' Ministry.

The public is ready for the most drastic forms of rationing—witness the general acceptance of clothes rationing. As a means of controlling consumption it is obviously effective, but there are objections to the present scheme; objections which would be magnified in relation to food. If you have the means to "buy to last," the system is good. If you are a poor working-class mother, who can only buy the cheapest, you are, in effect, working on half the coupons.

Something must be done about the queues. They have not assumed the proportions of the last war and they are usually for unrationed goods in short supply. They are worst in the provinces, particularly in reception areas where shortages are acute. This is due to maldistribution and the Ministry will have to do something drastic about the shortcomings of the wholesale distributors.

Lord Woolton has assured us that the racketeers are being prosecuted in increasing numbers, but magistrates are being too lenient. The cases, moreover, that come before the Courts are the small fry. What about going for the really big shots? What about removing the incentives? There is a great deal of speculation in canned goods, for instance. In the summer months, all canned goods should be "blocked"; while seasonal goods are in supply, consumption of canned goods is eating up reserves. The food licences of the convicted racketeer should be cancelled; his shop should be taken over, if it is necessary to a district, and managed for the Ministry.

Another aspect of the Home Front was the two days' debate on civil defence. Herbert Morrison, and other Government spokesmen, resisted the demand, voiced by Kenneth Lindsay, for a Ministry of Civil Defence. The Government's case was that there were too many complex services involved. Mr. Ramsbotham made an attack on planners in which he said that "the planner is apt to forget the nature of the person for whom he has to plan. . . . He is apt to regard humanity as a mass." That was certainly true of the plans for the homeless, but it is a criticism of the mentality of those who plan and not of the need for planning. Half the mess in civil defence has been due to the fact that the welfare services have been unplanned and shapeless. That was why one welcomed the intervention of Mr. H. U. Willink in the debate, speaking as Regional Commissioner for the London homeless. As one who was a violent critic of his appointment, I want to say that the provision for the homeless in London has improved out of all recognition.

Mr. Willink made a good speech and the most telling and disquieting part of it was his statement that, while people from abroad, all from different countries, had consulted him on London's preparations, there had been "no such interest in this country." "It is," he said, "a curious fact, in view of the experience of London in September and October, which preceded the experience of provincial cities, that nobody in my office or myself has ever been asked for any general information on the way London attempted to deal with this problem by any other local authority in England, Scotland or Ireland."

One effect of the debate was the announcement that Regional Commissioners for the Homeless would be appointed for all parts of the country. Another concession was the announcement by Mr. Ernest Brown that hutted camps and hospitals are to be established on the fringes of blitzed areas. This was a pleasant surprise, for only a few days before, when I had raised this question at a Ministry of Health conference, he had dismissed it derisively. He also announced something which this journal has consistently urged—mobile teams of officers who can be sent to any town that has been heavily hit, so that "after the strain that those under bombardment have to undergo the local authority can, if it is required, have all the aid that our skilled staff can give them."

The arguments used against a Minister for Civil Defence may be valid, but the case of the critics who urged it underlines the need for blitz initiative; the Ministries involved do collaborate; the Ministers consult each other at meetings several times a week; but the chairman of the Coordinating Committee, who is the Home Secretary, should, when a blitz arises, have the power to act in the name of all the ministries.

Without going into the wrangle over the Ministry of Information, it is necessary to underline that one of the most criticial factors in the home situation is the maintenance of the confidence of the people. The public must have the facts. We have had enough of this nonsense about "giving comfort to the enemy," that glib get-out of Ministers when they are faced with unpleasant truths about conditions for which they are, departmentally, responsible. Nine-tenths of the improvements which were trumpeted in the debate were those which has been secured by disclosure of the facts and the public insistance that they should be remedied. The genius of a free people is in facing the facts, admitting mistakes and seeing that the mistakes are remedied. There is nothing more cruel or more infuriating to people who have suffered than the minimising of what they have been through. The people of this country have shown that they can be trusted with the facts, however unpleasant. We want the truth and nothing but the truth, even though, for security reasons—and they must be good ones—we cannot always have the whole truth. "We've got the Guts. We want the Facts."

As that Home Front strategist, Sir John Orr, has said: "There may be many battles on land and sea and in the air, but the resources of men and materials on both sides are so great that no single battle will be decisive unless the defeat is inflicted on a country whose people are already war weary and beginning to wonder whether the cause they are fighting for is worth the sacrifice they are making. If it is a long war, the issue will depend more upon the will to victory and the power of endurance of the people than on the achievements of the fighting forces. The strength of the Home Front depends upon the physical and spiritual stamina of the people."

RITCHIE CALDER

THE REFORM OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

SIR MALCOLM ROBERTSON'S report to Mr. Eden on the Reform of the Foreign Service has had a good press. In fact, it merely recommends the acceptance of a proposal which was strongly urged upon the British Government by the MacDonnell Commission 27 years ago. The abolition of the means test for the Diplomatic Service was one of the major reforms of 1919; though statistical investigations made by Mr. R. T. Nightingale for the period before 1929, and by myself for the subsequent ten years, have shown that it did not seriously alter the character of the Service. Careful students of the Foreign Office List will, I think, be tempted to withhold any comment upon Mr. Eden's acceptance of the Robertson Report until they see what it amounts to in practice. Certainly, the results of the reforms of 1919 have been disappointingly small.

Those results may be put quite simply by saying that, since 1919, every major diplomatic post has been held by exactly the same type of person who held it before the reforms, with the single exception of Sir Stafford Cripps' appointment to Moscow. Though the States which came into being after Versailles were very different from those which went before it, the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service underwent no sort of adaptation to new conditions. It was possible to visit our embassies and legations in places like Washington and Paris, Berlin and Moscow and Sofia, in the confident expectation that there would be no one in any of them who knew, or even attempted to know, the outstanding figures in the Left movements, still less the trade union movements, of those countries. Even to-day it is accurate to say that there is no one in Washington who can pretend to serious acquaintance with the Labour movement of the United States. The mind of the Foreign Office still moves in an orbit defined by the pre-war world of 1914. How little relation that mind has to the realities of the present day is revealed in the published memoirs of almost any Foreign Office official or diplomat of our time. Few of them, perhaps, have been so naïve as Sir Neville Henderson; but it is important to remember that he was, after all, the product of a system in which he could climb by progressive stages to one of the three most important posts in the Service.

At the moment we have a great mass of unemployed diplomats, old and middle-aged; a considerable number of them are employed in the work of propaganda in its different aspects. If their labours

in that task could be examined in detail by a searching Royal Commission, it would, I suspect, emerge beyond dispute that the same limitations which characterised their effort in the "appeasement" period are responsible for a good many of the limitations which are laid at the door of the Ministry of Information. Above all, they conceive of propaganda as words directed by "gentlemen" to "gentlemen." They cannot conceive that the working-classes of France and Germany, of Italy and Spain, are no longer profoundly moved by what the "gentlemen" have done on their behalf. They suspect all efforts to speak to the workers in terms which suggest the need of a vital change in regime. They fight long rearguard actions, warmly supported by their colleagues in the Foreign Office, against anything which might pain General Franco or suggest that British Labour conceives that victory means a change in the class-structure of society. Half the puerility of our foreign propaganda is the effect of the dead hand they are permitted to impose upon its substance. Until Mr. Duff Cooper is permitted to rid himself of their influence, it is unlikely that his Ministry will catch the ear of submerged democracy. For most of them would not know how to enlist its support, even if it was ready to listen to them.

The truth is that the kind of mechanical reform Mr. Eden has decided to support will make little difference. A diplomatic service reflects the complexion of a society of which it is the expression; and while ours retains the massive inequalities which characterise it at present, the method of appointment to the Service will have no great influence. We need changes which go far deeper. Certain posts require, not the diplomat, but the statesman; most embassies to-day require men capable of understanding, even of sympathising with, the habits and purposes of classes outside the élite circle to which the average British diplomat so carefully restricts himself. And the Foreign Office in Downing Street requires to recruit men who are prepared to confront the need to organise a new world instead of being obsessed by a nostalgia for the old.

The real test of Mr. Eden's purpose, therefore, lies not in his announcement of post-war intentions, but his execution of necessary changes during the war itself. We should like to see men in Washington and Mexico City who sympathise with the new social orientation in those capitals and could speak to their exponents in a language they could understand. We should like to see him use men in Downing Street who had proved their faith in the urgency of international government and did not regard it as a dubious intrusion on their time-honoured universe. Not least, we should like to see the Ministry of Information relieved of the necessity to bear the burden of that inability our diplomats displayed to understand the forces of the world in which they moved. For exactly as what we do in the war-period will determine the spirit and methods of Reconstruction after its close, so the post-war character of the Foreign Office will be largely determined by the courage Mr. Eden displays in making vital changes now. Unless he is able to make that effort, it will be something like ten or fifteen years before any of the proposed reforms begin to take effect. No one acquainted with the position can doubt that they cannot begin too soon.

Above all, Mr. Eden's good intentions depend, I suggest, upon one crucial test. He proposes to initiate earlier retirement upon a proportionate pension. Everyone knows how many of his officials were men whose seniority made long years in important posts inevitable, and that they blocked the promotion of younger men for many years; with the result that when these had reached positions of responsibility a good deal of their virtue had gone out of them in their eagerness to acquire a reputation for tact and discretion. It is, indeed, a *secret de polichinelle* that Mr. Eden himself has refused one appointment recently which would have removed from the present block one of the outstanding diplomatic failures of recent times. We have heard too often of good intentions in the realm of diplomatic "reforms" to be convinced of their reality without some solid demonstration in practice. The times require great experiment; and a Foreign Secretary who achieved it in the present instead of announcing it for the future would deserve well of his country. HAROLD J. LASKI

DUCKS

I FOUND five white ducks on the lawn the other day. They were half-asleep with their bills blanketed in their feathers, and when I approached they showed none of the guilty self-consciousness of trespassers. They began to quack gently, and, when I opened the gate for them, they waddled towards it slowly and without alarm. I thought at first that some one had left the gate open and that they had wandered in more or less by mistake, but it became clear afterwards that they had discovered an opening in the hedge and entered the garden deliberately. We had the hole in the hedge barricaded, but next morning the ducks were on the lawn again, happy beside the birdbath. We blocked a second hole in the hedge, but on the third morning the ducks were there again, looking as cheerful and as innocent as ever. So persistent was their presence on the lawn that neighbours, meeting me on the road, would say to me: "I see you're keeping a few ducks." Probably, as I followed them out of the gate, I looked as if I were guiding a precious flock of war-time birds to the pond across the road.

By the fourth day I began to acquire a liking for the ducks. Their white shapes looked charming on the green of the grass; and it was merely a temperamental possessiveness that objected to their presence there. If there is room in a garden for chaffinches, blackbirds and swallows (on the telephone wire), why not for Mr. Finch's ducks? They are infinitely less harmful than the cows that broke through the hedge one day and trampled the tulip-beds. They have not the sneaking look of strange cats. Unlike some other birds they seem to eat nothing that one does not want them to eat. I should not mind keeping ducks myself. Why, then, should I mind keeping somebody else's ducks?

What I cannot make out, however, is why the ducks should want to come into the garden. They have a pond in which to stand on their heads. They have a road on which to get in the way of motor-cars. They have a large common on which to wander. One possible explanation is that the pond is getting too hot for them. Since the evacuation of the London schools began there are many more small boys in the country, and there is nothing in the country a small boy loves more than a pond into which to throw stones or anything else he can lay his hands on. He will throw stones and clods of earth even into an empty pond. He throws them with additional interest if there is a floating object, such as a bottle, in the water. His enthusiasm becomes that of a sportsman if there are ducks for him to aim at. It is not that he wants to hurt the ducks. He is merely testing his skill like a snipe-shooter. And I will say this in his favour: he misses the ducks so consistently that a psychologist might think that something in his subconsciousness wants him to miss them. The number of ducks at which small boys have thrown stones since the beginning of the world is beyond reckoning: yet who ever heard of a duck's being seriously injured as a result of this million-year-old bombardment? I remember once hitting a duck on the neck with a stone and being so terrified at what I had done that I rushed in my clothes into the pond to bathe the wound. My terror was not entirely unselfish. It was composed largely of fear that I had killed the duck and that I should have to face the wrath of the farmer who owned it. Luckily the duck was as hale as I was. I bathed its neck, but this was a work of supererogation. Still, the shock of having hit the duck made a lasting impression on me. I have never thrown a stone at a duck from that day to this.

Nor do I like to see small boys of a later generation throwing stones at ducks. It makes my blood, as people say, boil. When I see small boys engaged in this thoughtless sport, I try to get someone—preferably a woman—to go out and remonstrate with them. If no one will go, I stand in the door and shout. Vague shouts, hardly articulate, rather like the yells one utters in a nightmare when an enormous negro has hurled himself at one's throat. Vague shouts work, however. It is extraordinary how amenable small boys are to an inarticulate yell from a grown-up stranger. After one startled look, they turn their faces away and make silently and a little shamefacedly for home. Yet how innocent their recreation had been! All they had been doing was to play that one of the ducks was the *Bismarck* and that they were aiming bombs and torpedoes at it. Such seeds of patriotism ought to be encouraged, especially as none of the ducks has ever been hit.

Yet we elders cannot help ourselves. Having outgrown the stone-throwing age ourselves, we cannot tolerate the spectacle of our juniors indulging in it. A neighbour of mine, seeing a number of small boys throwing things into the pond the other day, said to them: "If you don't stop throwing things into the pond I'll throw you in, and, when I have thrown you in, I'll tread on you and keep you under." Such is the harsh morality of age. A few evenings later, however, what a change was there! As black-out time was approaching the farmer who owns the ducks was trying to persuade them to leave the pond for the shelter of the farmyard, where they would be safe from the foxes for the night. As gentle words did not prevail, he began to pick up pebbles and throw them as near the tail of the last duck as

he could get without hitting it. While he was so occupied the neighbour who had reproved the small boys for throwing stones arrived with some others of the elders of the village. Wishing to help the farmer he picked up a stone and flung it lightly into the water. The others, wishing to be equally helpful, stooped in search of stones and clods of earth to join in the work. When the ducks were about to land at one side of the pond a badly aimed clod would fall plump before the bill of the leader and drive them back in confusion. My neighbour and his fellow-elders had obviously begun to throw things at the ducks out of a sense of duty, but it was clear, after about the fifth fusillade, that they had begun thoroughly to enjoy themselves. Showers of stones and grass-plots were now falling north, south, east and west round the ducks, which scurried hither and thither in confusion. Grown men had become small boys again, and were reliving the days of their initiate youth. I doubt whether the ducks could ever have reached dry land if it had not been that a lull was necessary during which the village elders could rub their aching arms. During the peaceful interval the ducks clambered up a bank and waddled—almost ran—to the farmyard, quacking an anthem of escape.

This, and scenes like this, you may think explain why the ducks have recently taken refuge on the lawn. I doubt this, however. My own opinion is that ducks are in some respects like human beings, and never more like them than in this, that they feel that the place where they are not is better than the place where they are. They look under a hedge and beyond it they see what seems a Paradise in contrast to the prosaic world in which they live. It is in this temper that men during the centuries have left their homes and sought out Americas and Arabias. The romance of home hardly rises above sentiment, until we are a thousand miles away from it. It is the call of the distant—of the lawn beyond the hedge—that makes the heart beat faster. How strong is the lure of the other place is proved by the behaviour of motorists in peacetime England. Set a motorist down in the loveliest bay in Devon, and he will be off in search of a lovelier bay after breakfast next morning. You cannot persuade a man with a motor-car that the place where he is is best. If he is at St. Ives he will go to the Lizard, and if he is at the Lizard he will go to St. Ives. In fact, he is just like one of Mr. Finch's ducks.

Ducks also probably feel, like human beings, that the food they are eating is not so good as other food in sight. Often, when I used to go to teashops, I have looked longingly at the dishes of cakes on the other tables which seemed so goloptious in comparison with the cakes on my own. Perhaps, the ducks, looking under the hedge and seeing the bird-bath—which is sunk in the lawn—though to themselves: "The mud in the bird-bath is better than the mud in our pond. If only we could get at it to dabble our beaks in it!" And, in breaking their way through the hedge, it must be admitted, they showed more intelligence than ducks are usually given credit for.

It is possible, too, that in estimating the psychological make-up of ducks we should make allowance for the love of trespass, which seems to be common among all the families of animals, human and non-human. Even sheep, the least adventurous of animals, have been known to trespass. Cattle, dogs, cats, turkeys, all love to trespass. As for human beings, you have to threaten them with prosecutions and man-traps in order to keep your property safe from invasion. A timid soul, I take no pleasure in trespassing, but I have a friend who has such a passion for trespassing that many years ago I had to give up taking walks with him. If he sees a notice, "Trespassers Prosecuted," his face brightens and he says: "Oh, ho! Let's go in here. These notices are all tommy-rot. There's no law of trespass in England." A field surrounded with barbed wire is an irresistible temptation to him. He says: "Let's climb this. You won't tear your trousers if you throw your coat over the wire." Walking in the country with him became too much for my by no means steel-like nerves. Too often did I find myself in the middle of a field with a bull breathing fiercely—or so it seemed—into the base of my spine. "Walk slowly," he would say. "It's the safest way." But, with my knees in their then condition, I was scarcely able to walk at all. Then there were keepers with guns, and the barbed wire did sometimes tear not only the trousers but the legs inside the trousers. What seemed odd to me was that my friend always came back from these expeditions in the highest of high spirits. . . .

Perhaps he has a counterpart in one or more of the five ducks. They have certainly a good deal of my friend's brazen-facedness as they lounge on the lawn. Possibly their final quack-quack as they pass through the gate is a quack of derision. As I said at the beginning, they show no signs of conscious guilt, but then, now that I come to think of it, do human trespassers do so either. Y. Y.

ONE FOR THE ROAD

THERE was nothing more to be done. My trunk was locked, the packing cases nailed up, and such things as remained over—the primus stove, an axe and a saw, half a sack of rice, and a few clothes that I should never wear in Europe—had been distributed amongst my friends. But there was still a nearly full bottle of rum.

At Papetoai we enjoyed a longer twilight than people in other parts of the island, for the mountains on either side of the bay hid the sun until it was already high in the sky: our dawns remained cool and fresh, and the sea and the land radiant with a flood of soft light calmly awaited the moment when the sun, rising above the crest of Rotui, would suddenly plunge everything into a hard shimmering glare of heat. For us the sunrise was like the striking of a gigantic gong. So too our evenings were longer, and after the sun had slipped almost unnoticed below the mountains, the sky still remained an afternoon blue; and it was only when the puffy white clouds began to change colour that we realised that the day was over. In that short twilight, as the waters of the bay were darkening and the shape of the hills and hollows flattening out in shadow, the flowers glowed more brilliantly than ever during the day, as though they had stored up their individual share of sunlight and were now releasing it in a desperate effort to dam the darkness lapping at their roots. The hibiscus flowers were jets of flame, the bougainvillea streamed down in molten purple, while the gardenias and Tiare Tahiti glowed as white as white could ever be.

This was the best hour of the day. Work was over. We had bathed and put on clean shirts and pareus: and taking a couple of cushions, two glasses of punch and the guitar, we would make ourselves comfortable on the end of the wharf and remain there until it was night.

This evening had to be the same as every other evening: this was how I wanted to remember it all.

It was just over a year since we had come to Tahiamanu, but there had never been a year in which I could remember so clearly everything that had happened. The building of the house, the women squatting on the ground, chattering and laughing as they plaited the coconut fronds that were to form our walls and roof, while their men trooped backwards and forwards to the mountainside fetching the straight tree-limbs for the corner posts. The day the house stood finished—a bristling brown beehive against the brilliant blue of the lagoon—Terii and I had gone over to the village and returned with the canoe low in the water bearing its load of provisions from the Chinaman's store. And then the house-warming, with all the natives, who had helped in the building and furnishing. They had arrived at dusk in their canoes, each with a present: a little black pig, a chicken, a bunch of bananas, and a basketful of papayas. "The feast" spread on banana leaves, was laid out on the beach. Paroe had made a speech, and then the boys started playing their guitars, and when the dawn came Tapé was still playing, with a little audience clustered round him, while the others lay asleep, curled up in the sand. Our life at Tahiamanu had begun.

It was beginning to grow dark now. Terii had laid the guitar aside and was gazing up at the mountains.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked.

"I was wondering," he said, "whether perhaps we shall meet in France. You know, my class will be called up next year and then I, too, shall be going to the war. It would be fun if we met in Paris. You could show me everything."

"Yes," I said, "everything!" Our glasses were empty, so I asked Terii to go and make us two more punches.

Going to the war. This Tahitian boy might have to leave the simple peace of his bay, travel a thousand miles to fight, perhaps be maimed, perhaps die, for a cause of which he knew nothing. This happy body that had never known the imprisonment of leather or cloth, would have to be drilled and disciplined until it was one of a million, and no longer one in a million.

Terii came back with the filled glasses.

"It's rather strong," he said, with a smile.

"Dynamite?"

"Rather. 'Dynamite.'"

"Will you really take me round Paris and show me everything? Shall we see a circus like you've told me about?"

"Perhaps."

"And then we'll go and get drunk and go to a brothel?"

"Yes," I said, "and now play me something."

The punch certainly was rather strong and the darkness was deepening. The mountains were black screens with jagged edges silhouetted against the indigo of the sky. Over in the village a few lanterns

twinkled: the fishermen were setting out. The evening breeze had dropped and the lagoon was a dark mirror in which the reflection of the first stars traced a guttering light.

The days in Tahiti were glorious: dazzlingly golden, with the surf a line of thundering white. I had clambered along the reef while Terii swam about in the deep pools searching for fish to spear: or on other days when the heat had seemed too violent, we had taken refuge in the green gloom of the valleys, returning home at evening with a sackful of fresh water prawns. But the nights were the most beautiful: awash with moonlight or wrapped in velvety darkness. Sometimes we would paddle the canoe softly round the bay, spearing fish by lantern light, or when the moon was full, wander along the beach ready to throw a net over the fish that were lying basking in the shallow moonlit water.

For more than a year that had been our life. The beehive had been added to and improved. The fruit trees we had planted had just come into bearing, and the hibiscus hedge along the roadside reached well above Terii's head.

"You're not talking much to-night," Terii said.

"No, I was thinking."

"What about?" he asked.

How could one explain?

"Oh," I said, "I was thinking about meeting you in Paris and how very very drunk we would get, and all the brothels we would go to."

"Are there lots of brothels?"

"Hundreds."

He smiled and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"That will be fun," he said.

After that we didn't say anything more. After all, there was really nothing more to be said.

A. W. BAIRD

GIANTS

THREE years ago they cut the hazel copsewood
And felled five hundred oaks. Spring comes again,
And the slopes are a-glow with a myriad wood-anemones,
Primroses, cuckoo-flowers, campions and bluebells.
A few tall, slim beeches and delicate birches
Gently wave their tender leafage in the breeze.
But amidst all this loveliness,
Dark and stark, lopped of their boughs,
Like carcases of giants slain and stripped,
The huge oak trunks still lie.
None will come to haul them away
Furrowing the flowery soil, shattering the young copsewood.
With other labours they are busied now,
Slaughtering and destroying and being slaughtered,
Until the noble and ancient race of giants
And all their works have perished.
No time have they to spend on carting timber,
No thought to waste on the earth's beauty.

R. C. TREVELYAN

VANESSA BELL AND OTHERS

THE instantaneous effect produced by one's first glance at a roomful of pictures by one artist is, I have noticed, usually most revealing. Sometimes the eye registers discord, because the painter has been wandering in search of himself; sometimes unison, because he has been content to repeat himself. But when one is struck by a harmony, one can expect to enjoy work that is neither tentative nor mechanical.

The first impression made by the Vanessa Bell room at the Leicester Galleries is richly harmonious. She is an artist easy to enjoy but difficult to define. She is uncommonly restrained and has few mannerisms; her personality emerges but is never flaunted; she is a very "pure" painter without the romantic imagination that can either heighten or vulgarise. Whereas Duncan Grant, to whom despite the strong contrast in their temperaments she is often compared, is at his best, in my opinion, when he surrenders to an instinctive lyricism and wings away from the facts, Vanessa Bell is happiest when she concentrates upon rendering the object, with no apparent concern for style. Thus the least successful pictures in this show are the portraits of Michal Hamburg and Joan Balchin, in which the artist seems to be aiming at the monumental effects of the Byzantines or Cézanne. The large *Sunbathing* fails, I think, as a whole for slightly different reasons. The head and torso of the seated figure would make an extraordinarily beautiful picture; the standing nude is grand, the landscape packed with lovely colour—look at the pink of the path. But the standing figure, to my eye, not only is squeezed uncomfortably close to the frame, but is painted in a different style—and in a different light—to the seated figure. The drapery, moreover, is unconvincing, and like the standing figure, suggests the studio, whereas the rest of the seated figure successfully, if fallaciously, suggests *plein air*. In order to execute an admirably ambitious design, the artist has been obliged to forgo her customary concentration on the object, partly perhaps because the whole of the object has not been visible for long enough in the same conditions. Turn to *Asters and Hydrangeas* (54), which I take to be the best picture in the exhibition. Here, with no visible effort, is a flawless composition, exquisite texture, and a rewarding variety of colour, with every tone precise. The sudden brilliant green of the leaf on the right of the wan hydrangeas is a "find" of the mysterious sort that makes one deeply grateful that one likes pictures. The little painting of *Pansies* next door is no less happy, and, with its band of orange, highly inventive. There are indeed in this show at least a dozen works exhibiting the same sureness and sensibility, such as *Plums, Parrot Tulip, Partridge, Edge of the Pond, Flowers against Mirror, Roses and Peonies, Pond, Summer Evening, Flowers in a Blue Vase, Still Life with Bust*. Sometimes she falls into heavy-fistedness, as in *Tulips and Wallflowers, Lady by the Open Door*, and the background of the graceful and beautifully painted poppies—this is the natural defect of such patient, penetrating, contemplative artists, whether in painting or literature. (And how one would welcome this fault occasionally in some of the younger painters, who are so frightened of it that, like amateurs, they dare not carry their pictures to completion, preferring to vamp us with the deceptive charm we find in still undeveloped creatures.) Vanessa Bell never shows a painting to which she has not done all that is in her power. While retaining all her native fastidiousness, she is in the highest degree professional.

Two other of her pictures specially worth attention are *Interior*, for its sumptuousness, and *The Duck Pond*, for the lovely dappling of its colour. "Voici des fruits, des fleurs, des feuilles et des branches"—these, with silks, the shadows on snow and the mirror-surface of water, are the chosen themes that this painter prefers to meditate. A Metaphysical poet could make pretty play with the fact that so reflective an artist should love to paint reflections. The critic must be content with remarking that from the shimmer of a pond or river Vanessa Bell makes a fabric no less rich and gravely delightful than a Shah Abbas carpet or a mosaic in Ravenna, but faithful to the facts and tremulous with life.

For the other pictures at which I have been looking I must decline into jottings, to economise paper.

Also at the Leicester Galleries, water-colours by Frank Dobson and paintings by Algernon Newton. Dobson, deserting chisel for brush, a schoolboy making the most of his truancy, setting brightest colours together. Results always lively; often, especially in architectural subjects, felicitous. Newton, conspicuous among A.R.A.s for competence as well as taste. Pictures alternately resemble photographs and *pastiches* of 18th century. A romantic feeling for classical architecture: excellence of pictures usually in inverse ratio to size. A curious vision, but style too consistently a formula.

"Fourteen British Painters at Agnew's," ranging from Richard Wilson to Gowing. Wilson's *Evening*, one of his most enchanting works, although, or perhaps because, unfinished. Little Constables (3 and 16), little David Cox (7), little Wilson (13) and a Francis Towne, all most pleasing. Three Romneys—should be despatched to U.S.A., or has inflation already overwhelmed this form of currency? Six good Sickerts, the best *Café Suisse*. Steer at his best in *Summer Afternoon, Ludlow*, girls in white most artfully woven into landscape. *Nude* shows how like, and betrays how unlike, Steer is to Gainsborough. Anthony Devas's *Monksbury*, Rupert Shephard's *Resting*, Gowing's *Skull*, excellently represent the juniors. Pasmore's *Bouquet* not merely charming but truly respectable, and revives one's hopes for this mercurial talent. He has had the courage to carry the picture through—or the modesty to realise that, however gifted he may be, an adumbration is not enough. Nor is any freshness lost. Probably his best picture. Lastly, seven Duncan Grants. One the first version of his War Artists picture, and even better, though less informative. Large snow scene, handsome and most accomplished (this must be seen by daylight). Little *Snipe*, very finely painted, *Lewes*, over-lurid with bravura. My covetousness excited by *Newhaven*, delicious spontaneity—flickering water, a landing-stage (see colour of planks), steamer, warehouses on horizon, all transmuted and lyricised. A picture to put one back in love with life.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

PLAYS AND PICTURES

Cambridge Theatre Concerts

The programme of the next concert at the Cambridge Theatre (June 22nd) is as follows: Overture to *Idomeneo* (Mozart), Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, Italian Serenade (Wolf), Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3, Mozart's Symphony in D Major. The orchestra will be the L.S.O. conducted by Albert Heinig, and the pianist will be Louis Kentner. These details have been advertised already in the press. We repeat them because the concert-going public is slow to take up the pleasures offered to it. With the Queen's Hall gone, one might have expected to see its devotees transferring their patronage to the Cambridge Theatre; but attendances so far have been miserably small. An exception to this was the Chopin recital given last Thursday evening by Pouishnoff (not part of the series of Cambridge Theatre Concerts); it takes a celebrity to fill seats which before had remained indifferently empty. On the whole it was the less "appealing" Chopin: a group of ten Preludes instead of Etudes, the Barcarolle, four Ballades. Pouishnoff played with his usual energy and brilliance, and so far from flagging through a long programme extended by encores, seemed to gain precision as the clock ticked on.

"That Uncertain Feeling," at the Gaumont
"Nice Girl?" at the Odeon
British Council Films

Mademoiselle Ma Mère (revival) is just coming off at one cinema and Lubitsch's *That Uncertain Feeling* has just come on at another. Both play with the theme of tangled marriages. One is comedy in the French tradition, witty, careless, lively, with a certain warmth as well as dryness in the dialogue. Mlle. Darrieux is appealing and impossible; she can languish, clown, and strum on the emotions without for one moment outraging the conventions of this type of entertainment. Even the lure of Oedipus is made to amuse, equally with extracts from the diary of a wonderful divorce detective.

That Uncertain Feeling comes of a newer school. It is not Lubitsch who provides the situation of a wife, irritated by one husband, taking another, being irritated by him, and returning to the first; this has been Hollywood's No. 1 situation since the appearance of Thin Men and their consorts. The actors fall into their parts ready-made: who can portray more convincingly the distress of a smug and baffled uxoriousness than Melvyn Douglas? Who suggest more neatly passionate distaste than Merle Oberon? With Burgess Meredith as the intruder introducing Bach fugues and an unevenly-flowing libido, we certainly seem to come on something fresh; but it is no more than a hint of Lubitsch, just as elsewhere in the film we must ignore conversations and lose ourselves in the background if we are to enjoy, on this occasion, the touch of a master of elegant comedy. How delicious the latticed windows in offices, the dappled sunlight, the silky photography of Miss Oberon's dressing room! How arid, by comparison, the wit and the lovers, who after all are supposed to involve us in tenderness as well as cruelty! Of course, *That Uncertain Feeling* is amusing—up to a point; of course, it has passages when Hollywood is forgotten and Lubitsch himself steps forward. But it can never let itself go; it is drily exuberant, and the polish brings with it the rasp of sandpaper. With all its faults—and it is slapdash and sometimes silly—*Mademoiselle Ma Mère* is infinitely more alive, if only because we enjoy it, while *That Uncertain Feeling* irritates as well as amuses.

Nice Girl? is Deanna Durbin in a small town, tending the rabbits, tickling Daddy (Robert Benchley), falling in love with a visiting professor, throwing over the traces, resuming them, and singing, singing all the way. She sings rather sweetly, but poor old Benchley! I went to *Nice Girl?* for his sake, and it pained me at times to see him having to smile while Deanna sang.

Five films for the Dominions produced by the British Council were shown to the press on Tuesday. They consisted of a specimen news reel (Syria, Addis Ababa, London conference, Dominion airfields), and "shorts" of English child education, English bloodstock, Ulster, Lancashire cotton mills. One of these, the fifteen-minute film of children's schools in Northwood, was first-rate; the rest were respectable and not striking. "These films are not, of course," states the programme, "an attempt to reply to such horror war films as *Baptism of Fire*." Why, "of course"? I felt all through these films—very competent in their way—the disastrous soft pedal of our publicity system. These directors take delightful snapshots of the countryside and back them with hidden females chanting; they take close-ups of weaving machines and the workers, but the only voice allowed is that of the commentator. There is no comparison with *Baptism of Fire*, or *The March of Time*, or the best of the M.O.I. productions. But, again, why "of course"?

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

THE COMING WEEK

SATURDAY, June 21st—
- "Living in Cities" Exhibition, Branch Library, Church Lane, Leytonstone. Week-days 10–8. Till July 2nd.
- H. J. Laski: "The Frontiers of Democracy," Ethical Hall, Queensway, 3.30. Adm. 1s.
- Exhibition of Soviet Photography, to be opened by J. B. S. Haldane, Byron Rooms, 97 Parliament Street, 4.30. Till June 28th.
- Shakespeare Memorial Performance by German and English actors, 36 Upper Park Road, 7.30.

SUNDAY, June 22nd—
- L.S.O. Concert at Cambridge Theatre 6.30.

TUESDAY, June 24th—
- Eugenics Society Luncheon. Mr. Brian Goddard: "Eugenics and the New World Order," Pinoli's Restaurant, 1.
- Mass Meeting to Protest against Unequal Compensation for War Injury, Kingsway Hall, 6.30.

WEDNESDAY, June 25th—
- Fabian Lunch, Speaker: Senor Don Pablo de Azcarate, Royal Hotel, Upper Woburn Place, 1. Tickets, 3s.
- Women's International League Lunch Meeting, Friends House, 12.45. Tickets, 2s., from Agatha Harrison, 2 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, S.W.11.
- H. G. Wells and other speakers: "World Organisation after the War," Czechoslovak Institute, 18 Grosvenor Place, 6.
- "Women and Conscription," Meeting for Women under 30, organised by London Area, P.P.U., Holborn Hall, 7.
- Charles Latham: "The Future of Local Government," Conway Hall, 7.

THURSDAY, June 26th—
- J. M. Richards: "Contemporary Paris and London," Courtauld Inst., 1.15.

FRIDAY, June 27th—
- Public Meeting on Treatment of Prisoners in India, Holborn Hall, 7.
- H. J. Schonfield: "The Suez Canal," 3 Gower Street, 7.30.

Correspondence

STALIN'S POLICY

SIR,—Now that Stalin, who only a short time ago seemed as remote as the North Pole, is suddenly back in the news, not only for the minorities of Communists and anti-Communists, but for the ordinary British newspaper readers who are fighting the Nazis, it is surely worth while to get a clear picture of the Soviet dictator and his nation in this new situation. Here are a few ideas as they occur to me:

(1) Will the Nazis attack Russia? In view of Roosevelt's political pressure, the Nazis may be tempted to a typically daring political counterstroke which, they think, would change them from the present oppressors of Europe into "Crusaders" in the eyes of Vichy, Franco Spain, their hidden British and American sympathisers, and which, they hope, would leave the "Churchill-Roosevelt war party" ideologically nowhere.

(2) Stalin's policy towards this country has *not* been determined, as our Left friends purely abstractly suggested, by the retention of some twenty rather ancient Baltic ships, nor by the fact that some Polish leaders in this country may have made extravagant statements, but solely by the steadily growing threat from Nazi armed power, and the isolation of the Soviet Union.

(3) Since the Nazi capture of Crete, whose air bases lock the Aegean and the Black Sea, Britain and Soviet Russia are militarily isolated from each other: this may explain the costly Nazi onslaught on this island, the last necessary cornerstone of their European edifice.

(4) That is, in case of Nazi attack on Russia, Britain could give no aid except by air assault on Western Germany. In view of Mr. Churchill's past statements, is it possible to read this meaning into the present heavy attacks on the Ruhr?

(5) Although the Soviets may have given the Germans *local* aid in Poland and Rumania, the mere existence of the Soviet Union and the Red Air Force has been of *immense* assistance to Britain, by keeping a large part of the Luftwaffe and of Nazi mechanised divisions *permanently* tied up in Eastern Europe.

(6) It is therefore of vital strategic interest for Britain that at all costs the Red Air Force should be kept in being: i.e., Stalin, aided to remain a perfect Trotskyist, in the sense of following Trotsky's Brest-Litovsk policy of "neither peace nor war," even at the cost of temporary concessions to the Nazis.

(7) Thanks to the fierce British rearguard actions in Greece, Crete and Tobruk, the Nazi Middle Eastern drive was sufficiently checked to leave Britain one link to the Soviet Union—from the Persian Gulf through the famous trans-Iran railway and the roads of Iran. It is here, after clearing out the several thousand Nazi agents who have infiltrated into Iran, and, to a smaller extent, into Afghanistan, and are carrying on anti-British activities in both countries, that contact between Britain and Russia could be established.

Even if the Nazis should march to the gates of the Caspian they would not escape their Nemesis, said Mr. Churchill. But what about getting there first?

(8) Contact? What contact can there be with Soviet Russia? say the doubters. Immediately, perhaps—none. But let us be sure of one thing. The Nazis are deadly serious. And whether the Soviet rulers decide to take on the challenge, fight delaying actions in the West while retreating Eastward into Asia; or whether they decide to accept partial subservience to the Germans in the Ukraine, and to withdraw their centre of gravity to the East, is much the same. In either case, old-fashioned "Stalinism" and old-fashioned "Finance-capitalism," from which British-Soviet antagonism derived, will both fast become antiquated lumber; in either case, the ancient Pan-Slav antagonism against the eternal encroachment of the German, must swiftly spread, if not on the part of the Isolated Dictator and his entourage, then among the Russian youth.

Is is therefore not vital, as Soviet Russia faces pressure in the West, to try to establish contact with the Russian millions through *friendly* neutral countries (which Iran at present is not) from the South?

The key to such a move, as to any forward British policy, lies in a reversal of the present attitude to the main demands of the majority of Indians. Is it not possible for the Labour Party to give a lead on this question?

T. R. F.

THE BALTIC STATES

SIR,—Both Mr. Bernard Shaw and Student of Affairs made very unjust references to the Baltic States, and, being one from those States, I cannot let such distortion of truth pass unanswered.

Mr. Shaw does not even describe the Baltic States as States, but simply Provinces; obviously he means Russia's Provinces. However, these "Provinces" are as different from Russia as England is from Abyssinia, the people are of entirely different races, they have their own separate languages, their own long and glorious histories, traditions, culture; they hate the Communists, and they have the same right to independent life as any other nation in the

world. They fought hard in the last war for their independence and many young lives were sacrificed.

During the last 22 years the Baltic States proved to the whole world that they are worthy of their independence. During the same time they achieved greater social justice (!) and material prosperity than the Bolsheviks next door, and the standard of life was much higher than in Russia. We had enough to satisfy moderate requirements for a decent life and did not rob anyone, as did the "prosperous" Bolsheviks when they occupied the Baltic States. The occupation proved to be one of the worst yet experienced by these States.

The British as well as the U.S.A. Governments, having condemned aggression by Germany, refused to recognise similar aggression by Russia. Is it so difficult for Student of Affairs to understand that, and is not this war being waged against aggression?

It cannot be further from the truth than to say that the Baltic Parliaments, elected by universal suffrage, decided to join the U.S.S.R. The candidates to these Parliaments were exclusively chosen by the Communist Party and its supporters, and no other candidates were permitted. This fact alone shows the nature of these elections, and Mr. Shaw glorifies Stalin that he did not fear to face such elections. What a brave man must he be!

The trouble of the organisers was not to get the right candidates elected, as no other alternative was possible, but to get people to vote at all. Every person after voting had his passport stamped, and the Communist agents were busy terrifying people of the consequences for those whose passports were blank. (N.B.—The elections were being executed when the Red Army was already in occupation of the countries.) Despite all efforts people kept away from the polls, and the elections had to be prolonged several times.

But even these Parliaments did not enjoy full confidence of their Russian masters, and when the request for their countries incorporation into the U.S.S.R. had to be passed, it was found necessary to place the Red Army outside and inside Parliament buildings to supervise the "free" voting. These are facts told by eye-witnesses, escaped from Lithuania, and not by Moscow propaganda.

Indeed, there is really no need for the Student of Affairs to regret so much the failure of the British Government to come to an agreement with Russia. The Soviets want recognition of aggression, which the British Government very wisely and justly refuses to do, but Russia has nothing to offer in exchange. She is not going to help Britain fight Germany, and she has no goods left for Britain either, because she has to send everything to Germany. And she is really afraid of Germany: we had plenty of facts recently to prove it. It is all pure nonsense to say that Hitler let Stalin invade Poland, Baltic States and Finland because he feared Russia. It suited him then, because he was engaged in a big war with the Western Powers. Hitler once let Poland take part of Czechoslovakia. We already know the results of that. Hitler might have said to Lord Londonderry that he did not like Soviet tanks, aeroplanes and infantry, but that was in 1935, when he did not have that material himself. Things have changed since then. LITHUANIAN

THE SMALL NATION

SIR,—In your issue of May 31st Mr. Percy W. Bax expressed his opinion concerning the future of small nations, mentioning my country specifically. As no comment on his letter appeared in the June 7th issue, I feel that some one must speak up for the small nations. I do this very reluctantly, in the first place because I have to remain anonymous (to the readers, not to the Editor) and, in the second place, because my comment represents at best a personal opinion and not an authoritative answer to Mr. Bax's criticism.

Mr. Bax wants to put a large share of the responsibility for the outbreak of the present war on the foreign and military policy of the "small nations," and he wants to make future disasters of this kind impossible by keeping these "small nations" permanently under the control of the "larger powers." I quite agree with the thesis that, in order to prevent future outbreaks of war the small nations must co-operate with the British Empire and the United States to such an extent that their foreign policy and military defence shall be co-ordinated, and I feel sure that after this war has been won a large majority in my country will support this policy. I differ, however, with Mr. Bax when he sees this collaboration more or less as a yoke to be put on the "small nations." Mr. Bax seems to have forgotten that we once had a League of Nations, which was wrecked by French and British politicians. He makes no mention of British condonation of the attack on such weaker nations as China, Ethiopia, Spain, Czechoslovakia. He seems not to be aware of the fact that ever since the dictators came into power an important section of the British press and influential British diplomats expressed their sympathy for the Fascist system of government. I can recommend Mr. Bax to study the writings of such English journalists as Douglas Reed, G. T. Garratt, Robert Dell, and also Ambassador Dodd's Diary. Only if Mr. Bax succeeds in proving that the general picture which these gentlemen draw of British foreign policy during the last decade before Mr. Churchill came into power is largely wrong, will he convince the citizens of the "small nations" that they are any more responsible for the outbreak of the present war than the British citizens are. To my mind the greatest stumbling-block for future progress on the lines of co-operation which both Mr. Bax and I want our nations to follow is the fact that, although England has a democratic system of government, she also has such reactionary forces as the City, the Foreign Office and the House of Lords, all of which show a perpetual tendency to support any Continental movement which appeals to their fear of social progress. It is with these facts in mind that I cannot see what Mr. Bax means when he calls the Dutch Empire a "burden to itself and a menace to everybody else." To my mind these words could better be applied to the British Empire of the Baldwin era, when the British public was told that a League policy was being pursued and that rearmament was effectively carried out, whilst the truth was that appeasement was being forced on the "small nations" and the British Empire was left just as hopelessly weak as before. This is, however, no time for recriminations. I can assure Mr. Bax that when this war is won and I am back in Holland, I shall advocate a policy which makes Holland an active partner in a commonwealth of nations, which Great Britain and the United States must lead, but not dominate. A DUTCH SCIENTIST

REFUGEES

SIR,—In a letter in your issue of June 7th, Mr. Gleissberg makes some statements about certain refugee organisations to which, I think, only very few refugees would subscribe.

I do not want to deal with his statements of fact. He says that "there is no doubt" that most of the organisers of those organisations are Communists, and that "there is no doubt" that most of the members are non-political. I do not know the sources of Mr. Gleissberg's information, nor am I in a position to check its validity.

But statements of that sort are at any rate entirely beside the point. The question is not whether there are Communists among the members of those organisations, but whether the organisations themselves are Communist. Now, I suppose that everybody who knows the long record of cultural and welfare work done by these large refugee organisations will agree that it has been done on an absolutely unpolitical basis.

Space forbids me to show how their achievements have helped thousands of refugees to gain a foothold in a strange country, to keep up their own culture, and to come into contact with our British friends and British life and culture. Here I only want to mention the wonderful work which has been done, and is still in progress, with regard to interned refugees. All of us who have been interned remember gratefully the letters and parcels which were sent from these organisations to many internees.

These tokens of solidarity helped us enormously in those days of despair. While most of the smaller refugee clubs had either ceased to exist or avoided painfully to mention the internment problem, the organisations to which Mr. Gleissberg takes exception did all within their power to help us.

I quite believe Mr. Gleissberg that he is not a Fascist. But he must realise that he is playing into the hands of the Fascists if he separates one group of the refugees—and, after all, the Communists are refugees from Nazi oppression exactly as the Jews, Democrats, Pacifists, etc.—from the united effort to improve our difficult position. Once an anti-alien campaign is started, it will not stop with the Communists, but will harm every one of us. This lesson, at least, should have been learned by everybody who has lived in pre-Nazi Germany or Austria. A REFUGEE

PROFITS AND ABSENTEES

SIR,—In the last war the chief aim of the industrialists of this country was to make profits and the production of munitions was thereby seriously hindered. Fortunately for us, their counterparts in Germany were also influenced by the profit-making motive, and the production of America eventually turned the scales on our side.

In the present conflict the German industries are State-controlled and exist solely with the idea of producing armaments and essential materials necessary for their war effort. Despite all the controls, etc., which have been established in this country the profit-making motive is still uppermost in the minds of the majority of British industrialists, and this is the reason why our production is lagging behind that of Germany. It is the main reason for our disasters in France, Norway, Greece and Crete.

The profit-making motive must disappear if this country is to survive, because it reduces our production by as much as 25 per cent. Whilst our business men haggle over prices we are losing battles through lack of equipment and our ships are being sunk three times as quickly as we can replace them. The system which was the cause of so much poverty and unemployment in the years before the war is now denying the people the equipment and materials necessary to preserve their freedom.

It is quite true that the Excess Profits Tax has limited the amount of profit which can be made, but this does not get to the root of the trouble. The making of profit has been the impetus behind commercial activity in this country for generations, and our industrialists have no enthusiasm to organise the transference of goods purely for the sake of the country. Many, in fact, are ignorant of how to do so except on a profit basis.

This is the major question with which the Government must deal. Such points as absenteeism are infinitesimal in comparison and would probably disappear if the employers set an example to the workmen by revealing that they are willing to sacrifice their pre-war privileges in order to win the war.

The matter is so vital as to demand one of Mr. Churchill's impassioned perorations, which, through our shortage of equipment, he has usually reserved to defend our evacuations.

25 Bushey Hall Road, J. T. ATKINSON
Totley,
Nr. Sheffield.

EDUCATION AND PROPAGANDA

SIR,—As a senior N.C.O. I want to back up "Merely a Private" in his opinion of this A.E.C. business, and to support his notions of his superior officers' political feelings. He is quite right about the "anti-red" bias of those able to get at the controls of the machinery producing mental fodder for the troops. (They will, of course, indignantly deny having any bias at all—"bias" is always what the other fellow has!) Little incidents repeatedly show it to be true. "Education" for the troops, in the opinion of the brass-hats who are responsible not only for that, but for the series of brilliant and gentlemanly defeats we have suffered so far, is quite all right as long as it teaches them to be obedient: when it encourages them to think clearly and accurately about things that matter, it becomes Bolshevism, disguised Communism, subversive activities, anti-British propaganda—just "propaganda," in fact—and is discouraged in the many not too obvious, but very effective ways available to old Army and Civil Service sweats who know their King's Regs. by heart. Proof? Try offering, through the A.E.C., the choice to commanding officers of units, between a lecture on the history of public schools by a "sound" headmaster and a lecture on the necessity and methods of obtaining a revolution in Europe by, say, an expert who knows enough about the subject to talk sense about it.

But he is wrong about the feelings of officers—and N.C.O.s even of senior rank. A surprising number of us be-crowned, be-striped and be-pipped people are quite aware of what is going on and heartily dislike it. But we daren't say so. Not even to each other. In our messes we have to pretend we feel the way the B.B.C. makes out we feel about everything. If we didn't, we should be branded as "fifth columnists" by the "patriotic" boneheads amongst us, and find our promotion unaccountably slow; we have, you know, wives and children to think of, many of us. And we are expected to keep up the orthodox "respectable" front before "the men": this is called "setting a good example" and "maintainin' m'rahl." But the privates might

be surprised if they knew what many of us really think under our official exteriors. Ever heard of the oxometer? N.C.O.

COLOURED PICTURES

SIR,—Communications between India and England are now so slow and erratic that this letter will be very stale before it can reach you, but I shall be grateful if you will allow me space to break a lance with Mr. Clive Bell. Mr. Bell in his review of the Penguin Book *Portraits of Christ*, writes:

"Let us have no more illustrations in colour . . . coloured reproductions of oil-paintings, water-colours, frescoes and mosaics are the devil. At their best, they are unsatisfactory; and in cheap books such as these they must be at their worst."

People who live near London and can go into exhibitions of pictures twice a week very easily get into writing in this kind of way. They forget that others are differently placed. Since May, 1934, I have spent just ten weeks in England, and during those weeks had no opportunity of entering a picture gallery. If I am to see pictures at all, it must be through books. It is quite certain that the ordinary student learns less of the purpose and method of an artist from a photograph than he does from an even moderately good coloured reproduction. It is, of course, true that no reproduction can really reproduce, but it is also true that the best modern reproductions are exceedingly good. One of the keenest pleasures I have had recently was opening for the first time at the reproduction of Monet's picture *Antibes* in the Phaidon Series volume of the Impressionists. I have never seen the original, and I don't suppose I ever shall, so I cannot judge of the faithfulness of the reproduction; but I do know that it is a thing of great beauty in itself. So, Penguins, please do not listen to Mr. Bell. If your first lot of reproductions is bad, scrap them and get on with it and do better. But be assured that one of the greatest services a publisher can render to-day is to produce good coloured reproductions of first-rate paintings at a price which is within reach of the ordinary man.

STEPHEN,
Palamcottah, S. India. Bishop of Tinnevelly

ERSATZ

SIR,—The review of the Pelican book *Plastics* is of more than passing interest. Calder rightly points out that "we do not joke lightly about German *ersatz* nowadays." In the last war German *ersatz* was not a great success; indeed it undoubtedly had a demoralising effect. (The bitter jokes of Kat about turnip-cutlets, turnip-salad and turnip-bread in *All Quiet on the Western Front* will be remembered.

Derision of modern *ersatz* was a part of the pre-war era of appeasement and wishfulfilment. For instance, *Picture Post* in March, 1940, printed, in an otherwise balanced article about German *ersatz*, the following words: "The moment the present military deadlock is ended Germany's substitute industry will itself be hopelessly outweighed by the demands of the war." I read that article while I was with G.H.Q. France. Less than two months later I was back in England—G.H.Q. had been driven out of France by a military machine which depended to some extent on *ersatz* petrol, and substitute metals!

A healthy respect for the enemy's *ersatz* production is essential for a realistic approach to our own problems. In many instances the *ersatz* product is not merely the equal, but superior to the natural article. Artificial rubber such as *Buna*, *Sovprene* or the U.S. *Neoprene* is superior in many respects; it deteriorates slower, retains its quality of impermeability even in contact with petroleum products which can ruin ordinary rubber; some of these rubbers are less inflammable. Many details given about these products in notable "the-Nazis-can't-win" books are inaccurate; for instance, the cost of Buna rubber is usually too high when judged by the statistics given recently by the U.S. National Bureau of Standards. The cost should not be assessed at more than three to four times that of ordinary rubber. Figures as high as six or seven are still bandied about. In many other cases similar fallacies are being perpetuated until one wonders just why the German war machine has not collapsed already. Calder's review is certainly on the right lines. WILLIAM E. DICK

EMPIRE AND COMMONWEALTH

SIR,—In the first note of this week's London Diary, I read:

"The man in the street minds very little if parts of the Empire do break away during the war (the imperial idea has never been popular except among a small class in this country) and, as long as we have broken the power of the Nazis, who minds if Britain is less overgrown after the war."

It is indeed regrettable that such a compound of muddle-headedness and spleen should appear in a presumably serious and responsible journal. If this truly represents the view of Labour and Socialist leaders (which I personally doubt), there would indeed be little hope for the future.

Does the Editor think that Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and Canadians can read such a paragraph with anything but disgust and amazement? They are shedding their blood for the democratic ideals of the British Commonwealth of Nations, not for any "imperial" idea which may exist in the mind of the writer, but certainly does not exist any longer elsewhere. W. J. TURNER

[Really Mr. Turner should know the difference between the Colonial Empire and the Free Commonwealth. Critic specifically referred to America's lease of some West Indian islands, which, he suggested, in reply to Haw-Haw, few would regret in this country. To lose the alliance of the Dominions would indeed be a calamity; so too would Nazi acquisition of black colonies, but who talked of either calamity?—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

EVACUEE HOSTELS

SIR,—We now have three hostels already started for evacuees—two for Londoners and one for Plymouth mothers. We are now planning two more, one for mothers with new babies, and here we shall once more be extremely grateful if any readers would give us prams, play pens, push-chairs, folding baths or any equipment they may have to give that would be useful for infants. We should be very grateful if they could be put on passenger train addressed to me at Barland House, near Presteign, and sent to Stanner Station, G.W.R., Radnorshire.

The other nursery we are planning is for children from nine months to 2½ years, and here we should be very glad again of push-chairs, play pens and any educational toys suitable for children of this age. The gifts for this nursery should be addressed to me at Dilwyn Vicarage, Herefordshire, and sent by passenger train to Pembridge Station, G.W.R.

We are shortly getting out a report on the work done so far and will be very glad to send a copy to anyone interested. MARY PRIESTLEY, Warden.
(Mrs. J. B. Priestley)
Broxwood Court Hostel,
Leominster, Herefordshire.

OUR CHINESE ALLIES

SIR,—On July 7th China enters upon the fifth year of her struggle for existence as a free nation. The Japanese armies have fought with a cruelty outstanding in a world sick with horrors.

It is known that a population equal at least to that of Great Britain has been driven destitute from their homes, but the deaths from wounds that could have been healed, epidemics that could have been checked, mass starvation and other privations, though we know they run into millions, cannot be and never will be, counted. In the face of such suffering the help that Britain, herself so hard-pressed, can give, may seem too trivial to offer. Yet money buys far more in material relief in China than elsewhere, and its power for the expression of friendship, admiration and good will is incalculable.

We are trying to raise a special fund to send out to China on July 7th. But we must also provide for the continuity of our work for China in this country. In the past year, despite the bombing of our office and the dwindling of our funds, we have continued the unspectacular but essential collection and distribution of information, the writing of articles for newspapers, the organisation of deputations and the provision of speakers for many meetings.

Even at such a time as this we dare not cease our activities which we believe prepare the way for a new friendship between our two people in generations to come. Will your readers still support us in our double task?

LISTOWEL (President)
VICTOR GOLLANCZ (Chairman)
MARGERY FRY (Vice-Chairman)
DOROTHY WOODMAN (Hon. Secretary)
China Campaign Committee,
34 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

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EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

THE chief fault of the Victorian novelists, says Lord David Cecil, writing of Mrs. Gaskell in his *Early Victorian Novelists*, is that they write beyond their range. That is a criticism which must be applied with great caution. What is the range of a novelist? There can be very, very few novelists in any country who keep to the things they know in their bones. Opinion, beliefs collected and disputed, *Weltanschauung* are shovelled into all but the purely aesthetic novels; part of the impulse to write novels and a good deal of the material, is in a sense the work of the period in which a novelist lives. It is dangerous in criticism to take from the past the fragments that appeal to us, to think, for example, that the Victorian domestic charm can be separated from the Victorian sermon. And if, in picking up novels like Mrs. Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* or *North and South*, we say we prefer a self-regarding, captivating young flirt and hedonist like Cynthia Kirkpatrick to the worthy Molly Gibson or the prim and reprimanding Margaret Hale, we have no right to say the latter are lay figures, sticks and prigs. All early and mid-Victorian fiction, with the exception, perhaps, of *Wuthering Heights* inculcates the idea of responsibility, as our novels seem to impress us with the ideas of self-sufficiency and guilt.

What a sombre, violent and emotional scene these early Victorian novelists present. Did they create those melodramatic plots to relieve the peaceful boredom of prosperity? A glance at the social history of the nineteenth century shows that this cannot be so. It was a time of spiritual and material turbulence. Victorian melodrama was only a very slightly exaggerated picture of Victorian life. Those riots, shipwrecks, fires, lunatic asylums and deportations we read of in the novels, those awful family splits about legacies and estates, those sons told never again to darken the door, those rejected lovers trekking off to the brutal Colonies, are all real enough. One sees in the novels a panorama where women in childbed die like flies, where stepmothers are rampant, orphanages overflowing and hordes of fallen women grovel helplessly in the wake of a seducer who has the devil-may-care air of a disguised Sunday School teacher. And beyond them, in the middle distance, the factory smoke rises, the workers herd into the workshops, the mob plunges in the streets. Everything we can learn of Victorian life confirms the picture. People did turn out to be the missing sons of earls, honest families *were* ruined in the markets, clergymen *were* able to work themselves up to crises of conscience on what seems to us a mere point of order. My own early impression of Victorian novels in childhood was of islands of domestic peace surrounded by a sea of moral peril. One read not for pleasure, but to worry and to be frightened. The truth is, I think, that a vital and brutal age, intoxicated above all by the idea of power—not only Carlyle, but Mrs. Gaskell too, had a weakness for the rough Teutonic ancestor, the Viking and the Nordic myth—could control itself only by moral violence. The castration of youth, the idealisation of middle age, seem to indicate this. The Victorian novel not only put the heart in the mouth, but it started the burglar alarm of conscience very loudly in the head, and conventions are strong when the passions are strong. The very complications of the plots and sub-plots, the stagey coincidences, the impossible innocence and the impossible vice, are photographs of the Victorian mind which carried its characteristic doctrine of the survival of the fittest even into the reader's task as he sat down to be tortured by the latest serial instalment into taking life still more seriously.

It is not on these grounds that I would praise Mrs. Gaskell's *North and South* or *Mary Barton*, as the Victorian critics did; but it is on these grounds that I would defend her. They were didactic true to life stories in their time, and we must not forget this when we find *Cranford* or the social comedy of *Wives and Daughters* more to our taste.

North and South is dead now—it used to be in Everyman, but is out of print—and that is a pity; for now we have ceased to believe that the most important events in life occur only in the drawing-room, the bedroom or the psychologist's clinic, it is interesting to discover that Mrs. Gaskell was intensely moved by the questions of her time. The idea of responsibility was not merely philanthropical; it sprang from a Low Church sense of the coherence of Society.

Like all her books, except *Cranford*, like all Victorian novels, *North and South* is too long; that it is stiff, stilted and lifeless no one who has lived in the industrial north will ever agree. And on this point I must differ with Lord David Cecil. Economics were outside her range, but the men and women of the Industrial Revolution were not. *North and South* succeeds where Mrs. Gaskell always succeeds: in the essentials of typical character, in her skill at distinguishing and presenting manners, in her delightful eye for detail, the mild deftness of her satire. Ladylike though she was and very apt with a moral, she had an untroubled steadiness of eye when she faced human emotions. She shrank from investigating the passions, but she at least missed nothing from their outline. The motive of jealousy is lightly touched; it is never missed. Margaret Hale is a prig, no doubt, when she attacks John Thornton for abusing his workers. She is a snob also about tradesmen and manufacturers; but she is capable of strong feeling, her pride is not a mere self-eating. The question of the goodness of Margaret Hale is a little complicated. The plain north-country people are quick to tell her that she is mere social manner, for she fails to fulfil promises. She makes a silly fuss about telling a lie, one of those awful lies which wreck love affairs according to the Victorian convention; but is she mortified by her wickedness, or is she really afraid, in her pride, that she has shown a weakness to a lover she has so far kept at arm's length? As the portrait of a normally prim young woman (and it was Fielding who, with real Englishness, spoke of the irresistible attraction of the prude) freezing up in a hostile environment, Mrs. Gaskell's picture of the conflicts in Margaret Hale's character is an accurate one. John Thornton's shrewd and hard old mother sums her up with grim approval. The old lady is reserved about Margaret's goodness. Margaret's will is what she notes.

This mother is a wonderful sketch. One sees her in that too blatant and ornate drawing-room which looks out upon the mill, a woman with a single passion, a primitive love for her son. "Her face moved slowly from one decided expression to another equally decided." Stiff and forbidding, she is, to the southerner, implacable, blankly insensitive and interfering, but the heart is there, now fierce, now yielding. Hard as she is, she is at her son's mercy. She is the first to see that he will fall for Margaret because of Margaret's pride, because he knows the affair will be a battle and probably will be lost. The obstinacy of the northern character, a streak of sadism in it which instinctively prefers enemies to friends, are admirably displayed. This is brought out even more successfully in the tale of Thornton's relations with his workers. At first Margaret sees only the mutual hatred in the relationship; then she perceives that both sides like hating. It is a sort of independence with them, a sport, an animal instinct which on both sides seeks, not moral solutions, but a master. The reconciliation of Thornton with the strike leader whom he has sacked and intends to victimise is extraordinary but utterly truthful to northern manners. And, in fact, whenever Mrs. Gaskell is among the lives of people—and the half-starving Darkshire workers with their deathbeds, their drunks and their touch of fantastic Methodism are like a different human species from the ladies of Cranford—she has a true eye and ear.

In all her work, from *Cranford* onwards, Mrs. Gaskell is the neat social historian. First of all she is the historian of the impecunious genteel, then her net is thrown wider until in *Wives and Daughters* it catches a whole society, from the aristocracy and the squirearchy down to the professions and trades. Why, Molly Gibson, the doctor's daughter, asks Lady Harriet, why do you speak of my class as if we were a strange kind of animal instead of human beings? That question Mrs. Gaskell put to all classes. In her own way, Mrs. Gaskell was a Lady Harriet, an animal collector. She never gets speech wrong, from dialect to drawl. So that when she came to social strife in *North and South*—and it may be remembered that Dickens published her immediately after *Hard Times*—she had the practice of faithful record. The streets, and again the manners of the streets in that northern town, are done with the fidelity of a Dutch painting, though never overdone. She observes not only particular looks and phrases, but the general look, the drift of the common gossip. She contrasts the brutality of the mill atmosphere with the superstition of Margaret's beloved Hampshire village. With the reproachfulness of the good but detached Church lady, she notes how both places go blindly on in the pursuit of their own magic. The chapters of discussion are not good; they stick out like lectures, simply because Mr. Hale is in them and Mr. Hale is a failure. (He is the inevitably Victorian tribute to the tedious pathos of self-pity). But there is one passage of discussion which strikes the eye nowadays because of its curious modern echo. Thornton is answering the liberal intellectual Platonist from Oxford:

> "Remember we are of a different race from the Greeks . . . I belong to Teutonic blood; it is little mingled in this part of England to what it is in others; we retain much of their language; we retain more of their spirit; we do not look upon life as a time of enjoyment, but as a time for action and exertion."

He would certainly get that in marrying Mildred; but let the don cut him short. "In short you would like the Heptarchy back again," says the don answering Thornton's assertion of tribal independence. . . . "You are regular worshippers of Thor."

Rosenberg in Yorkshire! Is it an inevitable phase in the development of new communities which are feeling their strength? The discussion ends in the air; indeed it is cut short by a more familiar Mrs. Gaskell who has the art of introducing a distrait remark which will also indicate a fresh touch to the development of a situation. Her sister writes from Corfu, Margaret suddenly interjects, that calico is cheaper and better there! Just a small, trite remark apropos of nothing and yet, what has the author done? She has shown that Margaret is beginning to get interested in the vulgar textile trade—a sign favourable for Mr. Thornton—and that before long Mr. Thornton will have to keep his eye on foreign competition. It would be foolish to make much of a point of such a detail, but Mrs. Gaskell's work was built out of thousands of such small, light, truthful touches. The parish visitor sees what is in a room, though she may not grasp the forces that have made that room what it is. In the long domestic gossip of that visit, Mrs. Gaskell's is one of the quickest pairs of eyes.

V. S. PRITCHETT

NEW WRITING

Folios of New Writing, Spring 1941. Edited by JOHN LEHMANN. *Hogarth Press.* 5s.

The Penguin New Writing, 6. Edited by JOHN LEHMANN. *Penguin Books.* 6d.

Two qualities that belonged to the original *New Writing* remain with the wartime *Folios* and the monthly *Penguin*. The first is the Editor's ability to pick winners. By winners, I mean a story like V. S. Pritchett's *Sense of Humour*, a piece of autobiographical fiction like Rosamond Lehmann's *The Red-Haired Miss Daintreys*, which not only romp home of themselves, but far outstrip their authors' talents as we have known them up to that moment. Such winners can't, of course, be found in every number, but the reputation of a literary magazine depends finally on the chances of our finding them, and on our belief that authors will write their best in its pages.

The second quality—I should put it second and not first—is a certain level and endeavour, an intellectual *raison d'être*, which the Editor shares with his contributors. This also is strongly marked in the various phases of *New Writing*. It is easy to flip pellets at the title, with its emphasis on *New;* but a magazine must have a trademark, it must be read by the young if it is to succeed; and the pages collected by Mr. Lehmann are, many of them, new in one way or another. He gives space to reporting; and it is true that, in the world as it is to-day, many facts have simply to be stated to make their effect. He also keeps an eye open to experiment; sometimes his experimental writers justify themselves, as I think Henry Green does, with his bizarre syntax and descents into baby-talk; others fail—George Barker, for example, in his prose jigsaws.

To keep a balance between documentary realism and imaginative daring, to fling as wide a net as possible, *and* to land the outsize fish—that seems to me to have been Mr. Lehmann's task, which he has admirably carried out. The weak points have been (sometimes) in his choice of verse, and in the readiness to print, from Siam or Brazil, stories whose chief interest is that they come from Siam or Brazil. The pages in *New Writing* which I have turned over quickly in the past have usually been of the latter kind. Partly, no doubt, it was the fault of presentation, for the section that interests me most in the spring *Folios* is that devoted to the Chinese short story. An admirable essay by Mr. Harold Acton describes the revolution that has taken place in Chinese writing during the last three decades; the adoption of idiomatic speech, influence of the Russians, interaction of social realism and poetry, growth of a native pointillist style. This places so well the two stories that follow that we read them with sharp attention. And very good the stories are. "Mr. Hua Wei" is a portrait, humorously and satirically sketched, of a fat-bellied busybody who tears from one political platform to another bestowing platitudes and gathering importance from a patriotism purely mercenary. Mr. Acton describes the author, Chang T'ien-yi, as being influenced by Dickens, but adds that his writing is marked by "a Chinese economy of effect." Perhaps it is the material of his story that reminds one also of nineteenth-century Russian satire; here, again, are the braided windbags bred of bureaucracy, the students conservative even in revolution, the average citizen beaming and apathetic. The other story, "Half a Cartload of Straw Short," by Yao Hsuëh-yin, shows a more obviously Russian influence. Mr. Acton points to Gorky. It is a story of guerrilla warfare against the Japanese. For the peasant soldier, a queer simpleton and guileless adventurer, always smoking an empty pipe, the Japanese are no more than "the northern soldiers," and he can turn aside from reconnoitring to steal a rope for his ox. Even at the end, when he has begun

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to grasp who the Japanese are and what revolution is, his thoughts are still tethered to a sallow-faced woman at home and a yellow ox. The humour and pathos of this character are brought out by a style remarkable for its lightness and brevity. These two stories gain by being read together in the light of Mr. Acton's criticism.

The second "feature" of the spring *Folios* is the discussion following Virginia Woolf's "The Leaning Tower," an analysis of English literature in the 'thirties, published in the last number. Edward Upward defines, and largely defends, the politics of that literature; B. L. Coombes states its relation to the working class; Louis MacNeice argues back and makes good points, though with a rather prickly insistence; John Lehmann adds a postscript, which is both summing-up and homage to a fine writer.

The most striking of the other contributions are Henry Green's description of firemen in action, V. S. Pritchett's portrait-reminiscence of "Aunt Gertrude," the first of Louis MacNeice's two poems, and the four poems by Laurie Lee. Altogether, this is a good number, and a reward to the reading public which does not subscribe to Lord Beaverbrook's ideal of "No culture in wartime."

The Penguin *New Writing* has gone six months. Any doubts one may have had that a literary magazine could suddenly jump its circulation from the usual 3,000—8,000 to something near 100,000 are now dispelled. With the past volumes of *New Writing* to draw from, Mr. Lehmann has a hoard that will last him some time yet; this month also he begins printing a series of contributions selected from other published sources. A chapter from Dylan Thomas's autobiography "A Visit to Grandpa's" (this month) will be followed by poems of Lorca translated by Spender and J. L. Gili. The best among the new contributions to No. 6 are Robert Pagan's "Hotel Child," a delightful description of a nomadic upbringing, and the appalling account by Capt. X.Y.Z. of the caste system in an officers' mess; the latter might be read in conjunction with recent revelations about distinctions between pilot-officers and sergeant-pilots. Among republished pieces I recognise, with pleasure, Chamson's "Tabusse and the Powers," Louis MacNeice's "Prognosis," and the best critical article written by Stephen Spender since the war, "The Creative Arts in Our Time." At sixpence, *New Writing* has reached the market-place. When last I stopped before a station bookstall, the assistant was busy selling a copy to a petty-officer. "Sensational!" hissed the salesman; and how the petty-officer's eye lit up as he handed over his tanner!

G. W. Stonier

SINGER

John McCormack: The Story of a Singer.
By L. A. G. Strong. *Methuen.* 15s.

Mention John McCormack, and you discover a curious cleavage in musical opinion. Roughly three categories emerge: (*a*) the great public, who have always idolised him; (*b*) the more consciously "musical" strata, who generally hold him unworthy of their notice; (*c*) musicians, critics and a handful of genuine *cognoscenti*, who idolise him no less than the crowd. The last group includes not only men like Busoni, Kreisler, Rachmaninoff, Ernest Newman, but practically all other singers. I have never heard one mention McCormack without a touch of awe: among those whose praises are cited by Mr. Strong we find Caruso, Chaliapin, Destinn and Blanche Marchesi. No question, the aristocrats and the mob are, between them, in the right: Count McCormack *is* the most perfect and most versatile singer of the century; and even to-day, after his formal retirement, he makes most other singers sound like amateurs. Then why is it that so many earnest and excellent music-lovers sniff at him?

There have been two main objections: his accent and his choice of programme.

> Sinnce furrst vy saa yoor fėss, uy ree-sallved
> Too anner aand ree-nownn yoo.

That, according to Mr. Strong, is how he begins a famous Elizabethan lyric; and the transliteration is not unjust. It *looks* horrible; does it, as many people maintain, *sound* horrible, too? Myself, I think the objection largely prejudice. To B.B.C.-conditioned ears all voices which give full value to consonants and avoid Southern English vowel-sounds sound quaint and provincial. Everyone with an ear must admit the vigour, precision and unslurred beauty of much American speech; why should we reject the unfamiliar, but entirely natural, charm of McCormack's Irish-Italian? How lovely, in Handel's "Where'er You Walk," is the sound of his full liquid double "l" in the lines:

> Trees, where you sit
> *Shall* crowd into a shade.

For pure intelligibility his diction has never been surpassed; even in a slow Handel aria like "O Sleep" one catches every word. His German, it may be added, is careful but imperfect; his Italian by common consent miraculous. Mr. Strong aptly notes the influence of Italian schooling superimposed on native brogue:

> The Irish boy from Athlone took his brogue to Milan and found there practically the same vowels and the same insistence on the consonant. . . . Add to this a capacity for resonance on every vowel. . . .

Yes, that is what enabled him to give rein to his lyrical feeling and spin a vocal line more fluently than can the English tenor struggling with our genteel closed vowels (compare Gervase Elwes). Add unrivalled breath control and an extraordinary subtlety of rhythm and vocal colour and you have the elements of his equipment. You might sum it up as technical ease plus temperamental spontaneity.

The other objection remains: his choice of music. People talk as though his programmes were all trash. They were not, but they were certainly the most incongruous mixture imaginable: Piero della Francesca, so to speak, jostling Edmond Dulac and Mabel Lucie Attwell. It was bewildering and irritating, this attempt to please everybody at once; and, though the Count is a good judge of money, one wonders whether it can even have been good business. Each concert began with the old Italians, Handel, and a sprinkling of German *lieder*; and through these the Albert Hall thousands would sit unresentfully, like children through the inevitable overture waiting for the curtain to go up. A group of Irish folk-songs, often in Herbert Hughes' enchanting arrangements, followed, and here a moment of equilibrium was reached: all brows enjoyed themselves together. The rest of the concert—and countless encores—consisted of shop ballads whose very titles embarrass: *Thank God for a Garden, Through All the Days To Be, Sonny Boy, Just for To-day, The Prayer Perfect.* How many times, as the tide of sentimentality rose from tier to tier, have I picked up my hat and coat, only to drop them again when the next song began. It was not only that he *might*, by chance, sing some real music even at this stage of the proceedings; it was the inexhaustible fascination of his style. The miracle was that, after a lifetime of such stuff, it contained no cheap tricks or mechanical devices: however base the matter, the manner was always pure gold. Mr. Strong speaks of his power of "disinfecting" false sentiment, and the word is well chosen. Always completely sincere himself, he surrenders a naturally simple and noble spirit to the *idea behind* the trashiest words; the

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universal ideas of death, parting, religion seem to mean as much to him in the oleographic productions of Booseydom as in the masterpieces of Goethe, Wolf and Schubert. No doubt, as Mr. Strong suggests, there is a connection between this catholicity of taste and McCormack's fervent Catholicism. The faith of a devout Catholic is not affected by inadequate words, any more than by tawdry religious images of the kind exhibited in cheap shop windows.

If he responds so readily to the worst, there can at least be no doubt about his response to the best. It is not only that he was perhaps Covent Garden's most distinguished Don Ottavio ever (witness his record of *Il mio tesoro*, which should be immortal), or that no one surpasses his understanding of Hugo Wolf. He knows, and can discuss intelligently, whole traits of music that most singers have never heard of. For every fine song he sings in public, there are a dozen more which he knows by heart but has never put into his programmes; why, heaven knows. Anthony Asquith once told me how, after a chance Hollywood meeting, the tenor brought him back to his house and sang him Hugo Wolf off the reel, song after song, thirty or forty of them. And yet, at all the scores of his recitals I have attended, he has never strayed beyond the same inevitable three or four. He has made a memorable record of Wolf's *Ganymed*; I believe he has never sung it in public. *Why are these things hid?* I don't want to deprive the crowd of their *Prayers Perfect*; but need the poor highbrows have been so thoroughly eclipsed?

Mr. Strong's book is not what you would expect of a novelist. Musically, it is admirable; everything he says about singing and opera shows discrimination and love. And he earns from me a special good mark for realising the importance of the gramophone; he discusses acutely the now fast vanishing recorded masterpieces of McCormack and his great contemporaries. On the side of narrative and character, however, he is often dull and perfunctory: the usual success-story, with the usual royal and back-stage anecdotes told in the usual style. Typical words and phrases: "aplomb," "flabbergasted," "be that as it may," "lack of inches," "expressed in terms of unseemly vigour." He has missed an opportunity: there is more than this in John McCormack. His personal magnetism and power of narrative in song link him with the minstrels and troubadours. And that is what he is, a minstrel with the misfortune to be born in an age when the popular songs are all cheap and the good songs all sophisticated.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR

THE COLOUR BAR

The Colour Bar in East Africa. By NORMAN LEYS. *Hogarth Press.* 7s. 6d.

Twenty-two years back—if I may be allowed a reminiscence which has some bearing on the book under review—I received a letter from a doctor in Kenya, who signed himself Norman Leys, and said that he was about to retire from a professional career in various parts of Africa. He enclosed a long, unsigned document, badly typed and somewhat forbidding in its aspect. Having waded through it, I found that it had produced a deep and disturbing effect on me; it marked, in fact, something of an epoch in my thought and feeling about the "Native problem," and though I have often disagreed with the author since, the effect remains.

There followed the big book *Kenya*, now so well known. Years later came *A Last Chance in Kenya*, briefly recapitulating the first book, but pleading with a sombre fervour that the sands were running out, and that if justice were much longer delayed, despair and sporadic violence would take its place. Now comes *The Colour Bar in East Africa*, where the same material and a great deal more, down to the 1940 riots in the North Rhodesia copper mines, is resumed, but on a different plan and with a different purpose. It is worked into a powerful argument, simple enough in its wording to appeal to the ordinary British elector—the person ultimately responsible, according to the British Constitution. If it fails to reach him, its trenchant directness should at any rate have a highly stimulating influence on the minority, who already think, more or less, about the great and formidable issues underlying the relationship of the European and American peoples with the African Continent.

Dr. Norman Leys is the kind of man who, in the long run, makes things move—if they are capable of being moved at all. He is a man, not indeed of one idea, but of one theme. He has wide interests, religion, history, economics, but he has deliberately canalised his energies in one single direction. From first to last, he has preached the destruction of the colour bar with the same persistence as Cato demanded the destruction of Carthage.

There is a certain scientific view, and a certain political view, underlying his theme. He is convinced that Africans, throughout the Continent, have "ordinary human natures," the differences between us and them being one of opportunities, not of inherent capacities. And in the sphere of politics, he is convinced that the only remedy for the oppression of Africans is, in some form, self-government; and, further, that the mass of Africans will, without a shadow of doubt, be "sovereign" in their own countries in the not very distant future.

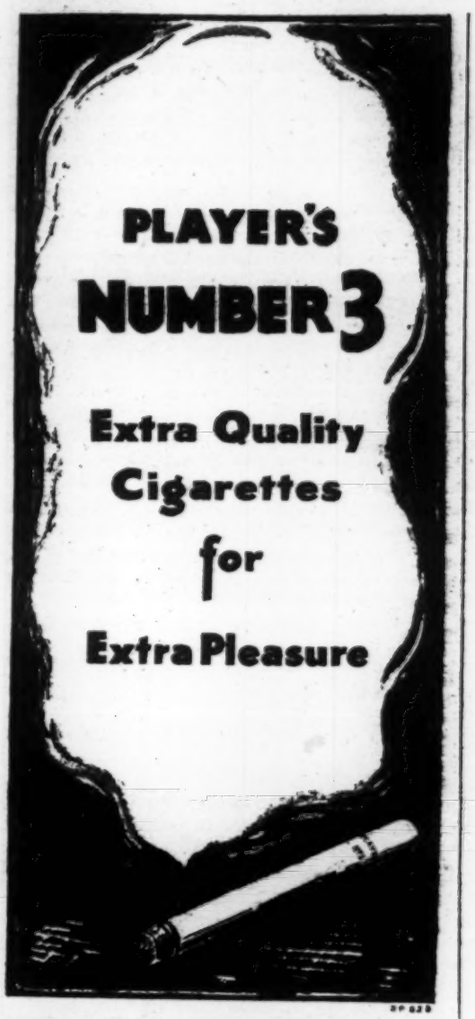
But he has never allowed himself the luxury of writing about the theoretical background of his theme. He demands of the practical men concerned that inequalities before the law—the root of the evil—shall be removed, and an equal chance of education be afforded. Do that, he says, and you can do or not do whatever else you please. Africans will see to the rest.

He demands this with a full recognition of the arguments on the other side; the white immigrant, he admits, is not the villain of the piece; the fact of African "backwardness," even though it is due to our own wickedness in the past, is a fact that stares us in the face and must be accepted; it conditions the pace of possible advance.

Practicalness is the note of his preaching. He has accumulated and verified his facts with far more conscientiousness and concentration than those who assail him as if he were ill-informed. And in this book, accepting the challenge of those who say "You never tell us exactly what you want us to do"—how well we all know them!—he adopts the original method of printing *verbatim* the circular despatch which, he suggests, should be sent by the Secretary of State to all Colonial Governors, following upon a solemn resolution of both Houses of Parliament.

A point of criticism, though a relatively small one, is that what is often called the "social Colour Bar" should have been excluded. Dr. Leys is right that the legal colour bar, with other discriminations that "have some sort of statutory fortification," is, of course, the essence of the evil to be attacked. But he could have added much to the volume of his attack if he had described picturesquely (as he could well have done) the innumerable affronts to the feelings of African people—highly sensitive as they often are—which arise in connection with hotels, with travelling, with place of residence, and so forth. He does pay a notable tribute—not more than is due—to the good that has been done by Christian missionaries in simply and honestly acting on the opposite principle, that of equality.

CHARLES RODEN BUXTON



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ENLIGHTENMENT

Let the People Think. By BERTRAND RUSSELL. *Watts (Thinkers' Library).* 1s. 3d.

This volume consists of a selection of essays chosen from books by Bertrand Russell, which appeared between 1928 and 1938; they cover, that is to say, a decade during which rational opinion was on the down-grade and irrational belief on the up. Russell preaches the merits of reason and the demerits of belief. Defining rationalism as "the habit of taking account of all relevant evidence in arriving at a belief," he proclaims himself an unrepentant rationalist. Rationalism, he points out, has in recent years been attacked from a number of sources. It is the mark of a rational man to base his "beliefs as regards matters of fact upon evidence rather than upon wishes, prejudices or traditions," but psycho-analysts, Marxists and pragmatists are at one in doubting whether this is possible. Our beliefs, they hold, are determined by our instincts, our judgments reflect our wishes (or our class interests), and all that reason can do is to dance to the measure which instinct pipes. Now wishes may father thoughts, but they do not breed evidence; hence, it is urged, we have no ground for supposing that our beliefs are true. (It is worth noting, by the way, that the beliefs of psycho-analysts, Marxists and pragmatists in which these strictures on reason are embodied, are themselves held to be exempt from the strictures. They are, that is to say, claimed for true in the old-fashioned sense of the word "true.")

Russell defends reason against these attacks and shows how the waning of the belief in objective truth, with its corollaries of a refusal to use or to listen to argument, and a scepticism as to the validity of argument's conclusions, have led to an increase not only of irrationality, but of violence; for if differences of opinion cannot be decided by reason, "there is nothing for us to do but to fight it out by the methods of rhetoric advertisement or warfare, according to the degree of our financial or military strength." In an essay entitled *The Ancestry of Fascism*, Russell shows how the decline in the belief in reason as an instrument for reaching truth has assisted the growth of Fascism and Nationalism by substituting for a single universal truth the same for all men, a German truth, an Italian truth, a French truth, and "truth for the principality of Monaco" and of Communism, by suggesting that there is one truth for wage-earners and another for capitalists. "Between these different 'truths,' if rational persuasion is despaired of, the only possible decision is by means of war and rivalry in propagandist insanity." Russell freely admits that the number of truths which can be regarded as reasonably established is small. In those spheres in which the truth is not at present known Russell advocates a reasonable agnosticism. He lays down the minimum conditions for this as follows:

(1) That when the experts are agreed, the opposite opinion cannot be held to be certain;

(2) That when they are not agreed, no opinion can be regarded as certain by a non-expert; and

(3) That when they all hold that no sufficient grounds for a positive opinion exist, the ordinary man would do well to suspend his judgment.

"These proposals may seem mild," he remarks. "Yet if accepted they would absolutely revolutionise human life."

In religion and politics Russell's conditions are emphatically not observed. Where the truth is not known men substitute the will to believe for the desire to find out, supply the place of knowledge by converting their conjectures into dogmas, and then proceed to inflict starvation, imprisonment and war upon those who refuse to share the dogmas. Where the truth is known, it arouses little enthusiasm. Almost all the beliefs for the sake of which men have persecuted and oppressed their fellows are either untrue or are such that they cannot be known to be true; but on behalf of the probably true belief that 3 plus 2 equals 5 nobody, so far as I am aware, has been prepared to make the world uncomfortable for anybody. Russell concludes that "rational doubt alone, if it could be generated, would suffice to introduce the millennium."

On the positive side he advocates useless knowledge, since useful knowledge makes for efficiency in action, and most actions are at present harmful, and an education devoted to training men's purposes as well as to increasing their skill. Modern technology has given men the mastery of the means of life without knowledge of the ends which the means should be used to promote, and the progress of science has accordingly been accompanied by the retrogression of man. Russell also praises education which aims at culture, not because cultivated men are morally better than uncultivated, but because being at least sometimes interested in impersonal things, they have something better to think about than ill-treating their neighbours in order to advance themselves. For whereas "ignorant men can as a rule only achieve" power and admiration "by brutal means . . . culture gives a man less harmful forms of power and more deserving ways of making himself admired."

These precepts are those of an eighteenth-century rationalist. Russell's manner matches his matter. After Shaw, Bertrand Russell is, in my opinion, the best writer of English prose now living, and no review would do its subject justice which omitted to mention the fact. His is a plain style; ornament is disdained and the mildness of the expression varies inversely with the pungency of the sense. Its virtues are clarity and poise, its weapons irony and wit. By their aid Russell succeeds in turning truisms into truths and achieves that most difficult of literary feats—since the devil monopolises the most entertaining opinions as well as the best tunes—the feat of making righteousness readable. Continuously the flats of argument are lit by the fitful gleams of ironic malice:

> Why did the sun give birth to the planets? Why did the earth cool and at last give rise to life? Because in the end something admirable was going to result—I am not quite sure what, but I think it was scientific theologians and religious-minded scientists.

On occasion the irony crystallises into wit which arises not from a forced collocation of verbal antitheses, but from the logical drive of his thought seeking its appropriate expression. Thus, speaking of modern scientific conceptions of physics and psychology, Russell says "mind and matter were something like the lion and the unicorn fighting for the crown; the end of the battle is not the victory of one or the other, but the discovery that both are only heraldic inventions." This is an exact statement of the conclusions of the line of thought which Russell is following. Russell is a master of meiosis; there is a disingenuous simplicity about his statements; it is only after experience that the reader learns to look for the catlike malice that lurks below the unobtrusive surface.

> Fichte, it is true, explains after a while that when he says "I" he means "God"; but the reader is not wholly reassured.

But on occasion, as readers of *The Free Man's Worship* will remember, Russell's style can rise to the height of noble eloquence. I have no space here to quote, but I would recommend readers to read aloud a passage at the end of the essay entitled "*Useless*" *Knowledge* and beginning "Life, at all times full of pain, is more painful in our time than in the two centuries that have preceded it. . . ."

Gratitude is due to the publishers for making this collection of essays available in cheap and easily portable form. It is likely to become a classic.

C. E. M. JOAD

LECTURES AND MEETINGS

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.—Sunday, June 22nd, at 11 a.m. JOHN KATZ, B.A.: "THE CALL TO SINAI." Admission Free.

THE ETHICAL CHURCH, Queensway, W.2. Sunday Services at 11.30. June 22nd. C. KENNEDY SCOTT: "HUMAN IMPERFECTIBILITY."

LONDON LABOUR PARTY LECTURES. CHARLES LATHAM (Leader of the L.C.C.) on "THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT" at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on next Wednesday, June 25th, at 7 p.m. Admission Free.

EVERYDAY LIFE IN U.S.S.R.—MISS R. KITAINIK answers questions for S.C.R. members and friends on Wednesday, June 25th, at 6.30, 9 Fitzroy Square, W.1.

CONFERENCE

THE PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE (formerly F.P.S.I.) are holding a summer conference at Frensham Heights School, Frensham, near Guildford, Surrey, from August 2nd to 9th. The lecturers will include Aneurin Bevan, W. B. Curry, Kenneth Ingram, C. E. M. Joad, John Katz and Olaf Stapledon. Charges: Members £3 15s., Non-members £4. Those wishing to have further details will be sent full particulars as soon as the programme is complete. As a large number of reservations have been already accepted, these applications for particulars will be dealt with in the order of receipt.

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REPORTS ON ENGLAND

One Man's Year. By B. NEWMAN. *Gollancz.* 9*s.*

Report on England. By RALPH INGERSOLL. *Lane.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

One Man's Year is a day-by-day account of Mr. Newman's experiences as an official lecturer, first to the Services in France during the *sitzkrieg*, and later, under the Ministry of Information, to civilians up and down the country. His book raises—though in far too oblique a manner—one of the more important doubts about our conduct of the war. Is enough being done to educate civilians and soldiers in the meaning of the struggle in which we are engaged? Clearly not. Yet clearly there is a need for it, and equally clearly, as Mr. Newman's account shows, there are very large numbers of people who want to know more about the issues, to have them placed in some sort of perspective, and to clarify them in their own minds. It is too often forgotten, particularly on the Left, that the democratic temper in this country is a very young growth. The instinctive defence of individual liberty may be rooted in our national character and history; but the impulse towards a wider social equality has only recently become at all widespread—perhaps only since the end of the last war. Yet, if it originated most from the *déclassés* than the "lower classes," it has now become for a very large section of the people a highly important strand in their feeling, even if still rather nebulous and ill-defined. For the English are as a people extremely badly educated politically. The war which raises this issue at its acutest should, if nothing else, have provided the perfect opportunity for a mass political education, using the word "political" in its widest sense.

That this opportunity has not been taken is itself one point in the circumference of a vicious circle. Mr. Newman records that his projected topical lectures were far from welcome to the old-fashioned military mind which bluntly told him that "the troops were not interested in the war." Such stupidity still lingers in high places, but Mr. Newman notes with some justified satisfaction that the services of several of the battalion commanders who believed this were dispensed with after Dunkirk. The vicious circle is already breaking. Besides, the R.A.F. commanders, he found, welcomed any opportunity for stimulating the interest of their personnel. It was always a relief after battling with the indifference of the Army to return to the enthusiastic reception which the Air Force gave him. Equally, in spite of the scepticism of some of the fusty-minded, there were thousands in England who were prepared to give up a Saturday afternoon to listen to Mr. Newman's exposition of the issues.

These conclusions emerge from Mr. Newman's book. It is a pity that they are not the subject of it. The first half of his diary succeeds in holding the interest, because the conditions under which he is lecturing are unfamiliar; and this part gives a vivid little sketch of life in France before the war seemed to have begun; but I found it very difficult to be engrossed by interminable descriptions of provincial lecture halls and audiences, and it is only fair to prospective readers to warn them of the *longueurs* which lurk in the second half of this book. Mr. Newman makes the claim that he turned out one million words in the year 1940. Of the other 900,000 I am not in a position to speak, but as far as this slice is concerned it would have been more useful if he had stopped at 950,000, and if he had substituted for a somewhat rambling personal account some general reflections on our policy in the matter of mass political education and some of the practical improvements which his wide experience must have suggested to him. But I must not leave the impression that Mr. Newman's book is all yawns. He is a popular lecturer by profession, and has some of the good stories one would expect from such.

I confess to having opened *Report on England* with some reluctance. These interminable reports of the Battle of Britain! After all, it took some ten years for the experience of the last war to simmer into that tranquillity from which it could be adequately recollected. While, in this one, every week newsprint splits off from its parent body and tries to achieve independent existence as a book. Yet publishers are a shrewd enough class of men, so there must somewhere be a public which wants to read yesterday's newspapers again. Still, I must also confess that I read through *Report On England* almost at a sitting. Mr. Ingersoll, the lively editor of *P.M.*, came fresh from America to see a fortnight of our civilian war, and this is the report, brisk, well observed, intelligent, that he took back with him to America. Its interest lies in the fact that he appears to be seeing not only the war but the English way of life for the first time. To explain tube shelters to his countrymen he has first to explain tubes, so that reading him we are given a double reminder of the grotesque unfamiliarity of the kind of life which now grotesquely seems familiar to most city dwellers. A readable book.

T. C. WORSLEY

"Horizon." July, 1941. 1*s.*

It is most important to our propaganda that Americans should continue to receive evidence that this country is still concerned with culture, and the considerable sale in the U.S.A. of *Horizon* does us a unique service with an important section of opinion. One American magazine has indeed suggested that the Ministry of Information should arrange for *Horizon* to be published in the U.S.A. In the new number, the editor suggests that at least forty Americans, authors, caricaturists, film-stars and photographers, should be invited to England to supplement the immediate work here of American journalists—a most excellent idea. The July number contains a paper on painting in America by John Rothenstein, a queer story by Antonia White, some more of Augustus John's fascinating autobiography (Paris, Conder, Beardsley, Wilde), a realistic and hard-hitting article by A. L. Rowse, and an enlightening sketch of the origins of "Bloomsbury" by Duncan Grant. There is only one poem, a long, delightfully clever, deplorably ramshackle affair by Auden, *At the Grave of Henry James*. Auden and James have at least one thing in common: they both changed nationality for the same reason—the neutrality of the United States.

* * *

In our review of Ferenc Körmendi's *Adversary of Men* (Secker and Warburg), we omitted to give the name of the translator. The admirable English version was the work of Mr. Lawrence Wolfe.

Week-end Competitions

No. 594

Set by Hogo Stewart

Suppose a crazy week of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION. The leader, say, is written by Y.Y.; Mr. Clive Bell, supplanting Urbanus, discourses on bulls and bears; Critic reviews a new volume of poems by Mr. T. S. Eliot. Competitors are invited to make whatever substitutions they like, and to spare no feelings. An extract of not more than 250 words from this extraordinary NEW STATESMAN AND NATION is requested.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, June 30th.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 591

Set by G. B. Dodington

A first prize of Two guineas and a second prize of Half a Guinea are offered for the best lists of six words from the Oxford Dictionary that have become obsolete and could profitably be revived.

Report by G. B. Dodington

A number of the words suggested were not obsolete or even obsolescent, but merely "poetical" or unusual. Towanbucket, who added amusing comments in clerihew form, had for this reason to be disqualified. Among the suggestions that I should like to use are "tinkerly" (clumsy or low), "rathe" (quick in action, early), sent by M. C. Jobson, "stentor," sent by K. Walker, "belgard" (a loving look), and "perflable" (that may be blown through, allowing of ventilation), sent by Leslie Johnson. Tahnit had several happy discoveries, including "wanhope" (despair), "nesh" (soft, of an answer or a succulent fruit), and "mim" ("obvious feminine of 'mum,' rendering her silence both demure and suggestive."). Margaret Fawcett sent "airling" (a gay person), "dolent" (dismal), "untappice" (to come out of concealment), "quab" (to tremble). Barbara Fletcher was topical with "bangster" (a bully), "boutefeu" (an incendiary), "backblow" (a blow from behind), and "brogger" (a pejorative form of "broker" applicable to food-racketeers). Each of these was prizeworthy, but I think Logan Pearsall Smith deserves the first prize, and W. C. Eyre Hartley the second. (A needless pudor made him omit from his list but include in a footnote the admirable word "arsyversy").

FIRST PRIZE

Our language is being day by day impoverished by two processes, the first of which is a kind of blight or decay which affects some of the most beautiful words in every language, and seems impossible to prevent. No effort would enable us to restore to our colloquial speech dead or dying words like *teen* and *dole* and *meed*, and the adjective *sheen*, though some tainted vocables like *dwell* and *delve* and *shun*, still linger on in poetry and metaphor, and if still alive, like *bide* and *blithe* and *brand*, may possibly appear in colloquial speech again.

The other way by which our language is impoverished is the false and pedantic taste which regards it "correct" to restore their foreign shapes and pronunciations to the terms, especially the French terms, by which English has been so enormously enriched. Of these there are thousands, such as *flair*, *rôle*, *débâcle*, *dépôt*, and *nuance*. If six of these words, now threatened by de-assimilation, are to be chosen as worthy of being preserved, I would mention the following:

1. *Malease*, which was used by Mallory and Wyclif and Langland. I consider it preferable to Chesterfield's frenchified *malaise*, by which it has been completely supplanted.

2. *Rendezvous*, often used as a noun by Shakespeare, and more lately by Sir Walter Scott and Wellington, and employed by Pepys as a verb also when, on Sept. 13, 1665, he wrote: "Here we rendezvoused at Captain Cocke's and eat oysters."

3. *Eloge*, which was made an English word in the sixteenth century, and has only recently been de-assimilated by being given an accent and a French pronunciation.

4. *Douce*, a most useful word, which is very different from *dulcet*, and still lingers on in Scotland.

5. *Literate*, as a noun, from the Latin *Litteratus*, which latter, though used as by Lamb, and De Quincey, has still (perhaps because Walt Whitman was fond of it) a somewhat illiterate appearance. Not only the *Literate* of China, but of Western Europe also, might be well described as *literates*.

6. *Misopinion*, a favourite word of the English Seneca, Bishop Hall, but, in spite of its usefulness, marked as obsolete in the Oxford Dictionary.

L. PEARSALL SMITH

SECOND PRIZE

Mazeful, bewildering.
Fust, a strong musty smell.
Gleek, a coquettish glance.
Lusk, to lie hid, to skulk.
Minionette, small and pretty.
Limberham, a lackey, a servile fellow.

W. C. EYRE HARTLEY

THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By URBANUS

BRITAIN AND UNITED STATES COLLABORATION IN FINANCE—THE GLOOMY MAJOR ANGAS—TAX-FREE SHARES—MARKETS AND A GOLD RUSH

THE war is now being conducted more efficiently on the financial front than perhaps on any other. There is happily an increasingly close collaboration between Britain and the United States on financial and economic affairs, and the presence of Mr. J. M. Keynes in Washington does a good deal, I imagine, to promote it. The Washington decision last week to "freeze" the funds of Axis nationals in the United States was followed this week by a Treasury order prohibiting the withdrawal, without Bank of England permission, of U.S. dollar balances held in London by non-residents. This order includes Japanese funds in its scope, whereas the similar American order does not. It should now be impossible for the Axis powers to draw on funds held by their agents in neutral countries for the evil purposes of their spying and propaganda.

* * *

But the American economy moves slowly towards war production. Major Angas in his latest digest (No. 73), which he says is the talk of Wall Street, forecasts a coming "bargain counter," that is, a slump in common stocks. The war, which hitherto, he says, has been a happy cocktail party paid for by the British, is now becoming "America's baby and how! The attempts to prevent the financing becoming inflationary will squeeze the Wall Street profit lemon until you hear the pips squeak in Washington!" He expects profits to fall actually because of the "triple squeeze of higher wages, higher taxes and fixed prices." He forecasts an actual slump in the total volume of trade concentrated in the non-armament industries. The Government, he thinks, will crack down on the gambling in commodities. Traders will stop adding to their stocks and production will decline. These economic troubles he expects to be accompanied by further war shocks for America. The index for common shares which is now round 120 will slump, he thinks, to 100 or even 80. Major Angas may know his American psychology, but on the experience of this country I cannot support his opinion that the total volume of trade is likely to decline when a country gets into war production, unless the Government restricts the volume of civilian goods by quotas or rationing, of which there is no present sign in the United States. Certainly there is a period of deflationary adjustment, but that was due in this country to restrictions laid upon the non-armament trades by the Government. and there is no present suggestion that President Roosevelt is taking that line of action. America has a long way to go before she approaches a war economy.

* * *

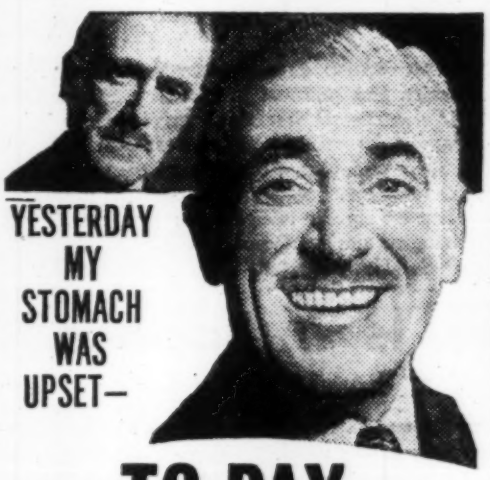
The Chancellor of the Exchequer went out of his way, I thought, to favour the Stock Exchange in regard to tax-free payments. The principle which Parliament has just confirmed is that the same gross income as would have satisfied any tax-free covenant, such as an annuity or settlement under a will before the outbreak of war (when the income tax was 5*s.* 6*d.* in the £), shall be regarded as legally discharging the obligation now and in future years. The Chancellor, however, has excepted from this resolution all dividends payable free of tax. The position of ordinary and preference shares, he argued, was quite different. In view of the increases in income tax during the war, tax-free shares had been valued in the market with due regard to their tax-free privilege. Business had, in fact, been done in the full knowledge of the current rates of taxation, and the Chancellor saw no reason for penalising those people who had made their investments on the Stock Exchange without any knowledge of legislative action calculated to undermine the whole basis of those transactions. This is a wonderful testimonial to the sanctity of Stock Exchange values. It will put heart into the holders of all preference shares standing at high premiums which can legally be redeemed at par by their respective companies. But why did not the Chancellor hold the same sanctimonious views when he made the vesting order taking over India Government loans which were not due for repayment for some years?

* * *

Believe it or not, there has been a boom in gold development shares. Johannesburg has been responsible by starting the "gold rush." There had been promising "strikes" on Western Reefs 5*s.* shares which recently jumped from 25*s.* to 35*s.* West Wits have been restored to life with a rise of 30*s.* to 4½. West Rand Investments 10*s.* shares at around par may be the next gamble, for this company has holdings in Western Reefs and other West Rand developments. But gold shares have not been the only active market. Gilt-edged stocks, oil shares and industrials have all been rising. I attribute this bullishness to short-sightedness rather than long-sightedness.

* * *

THIS VENEZUELA!—"The term of the outgoing President, General Eleazar Lopez Contreras, who took office in 1936, has by common consent represented an outstanding epoch in the development of Venezuela. His successor, General Medina, is a man with similar democratic outlook and ideals." (Sir Andrew Agnew, C.B.E., at the shareholders meeting of Venezuelan Oil Concessions.)



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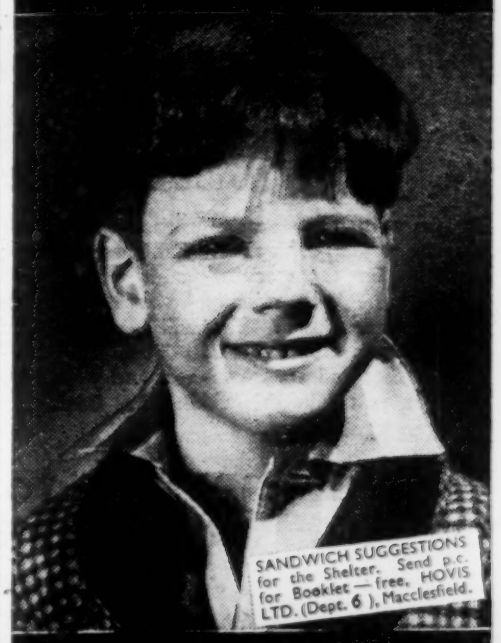

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